

ART, MEDICINE, AND MAGIC IN EARLY BYZANTIUM*

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In Byzantium the world of art touched that of medicine in a variety of ways and with varying intensity. Among the material remains of the Byzantine physician's trade are finely crafted surgical implements and richly carved ivory medicine boxes—and at least one silver stamp belonging to a certain *iatros* named Ishmael.¹ Aesthetically more impressive are the handful of deluxe medical manuscripts which have survived from Byzantium, including the famous copy of Dioscorides' *De materia medica* in Vienna, and the luxurious medical compendium in Florence (Plut. LXXIV, 7) which contains Soranus of Ephesus' treatise on bandaging, and that by Apollonius of Kitium on the set-

ting of dislocated bones.² Unfortunately, however, their miniatures like their texts usually reveal less about contemporary Byzantine medicine than about Antique prototypes. The opposite is true of portraits of such popular healing saints as Cosmas and Damian, Abbacyrus, and Panteleimon who, because they were holy doctors, were portrayed with the paraphernalia of practicing physicians of the time.³ Yet even here, the relationship between Byz-

[The reader is referred to the list of abbreviations at the end of the volume.]

*This article is adapted from my paper "Medicine, Magic, and Pilgrims," delivered as part of the 1983 Dumbarton Oaks Spring Symposium.

¹See L. Bliquez's article in this volume. That so few Byzantine surgical implements have survived suggests that they may customarily have been made of iron. Among the *miracula* of St. Artemius is one wherein physicians are ridiculed with the observation that their scalpels were "being consumed by rust." See A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Varia graeca sacra* (St. Petersburg, 1909), *mir.* 25. It is noteworthy that while approximately 60,000 lead sealings survive from Byzantium, only half a dozen of the iron *bulloteria* with which they were made are extant. For ivory medicine boxes, see W. F. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und frühen Mittelalters*, Romisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum zu Mainz: Kataloge, vor- und frühgeschichtlicher Altertümer, 7 (3rd ed.) (Mainz, 1976), nos. 83–85. For a wooden medicine box from Early Byzantine Egypt with what may be medicine tablets still inside, see F. Petrie, *Objects of Daily Use*, British School of Archaeology in Egypt, 42 (London, 1927), pl. LVIII, 52. In the Yale University Art Museum is a doctor's leather instrument case with attached *pyx* (acc. no. 57.48.1). Apparently from Early Byzantine Egypt, it bears an *orans* portrait of a little-known doctor-saint, Antiochus of Sebaste, what appears to be a set of tables for mixing medicines, and, along its upper edge, the phrase "Use in good health" (*Hygienon chro*; cf. *IGLSyr.* no. 370). See also note 3 below for depictions of Byzantine medicine boxes. The silver doctor's stamp is unpublished, and in the Limbourg Collection, Cologne. It is mid-Byzantine in date and bears the following inscription: "Lord, help Ishmael [the] doctor."

²H. Gerstinger, Kommentarband to the sumptuous, full-color reproduction, *Dioscurides. Codex Vindobonensis med. gr. 1 der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek* (Graz, 1970). A shorter commentary, with selected plates (again in full color) is available: O. Mazal, *Pflanzen, Wurzeln, Säfte, Samen: Antike Heilkunst. Miniaturen des Wiener Dioskurides* (Graz, 1981). The best Greek text remains that edited by M. Wellmann. Soranus' *Bandages* is part of the collected Greek texts of Soranus (ed. Ilberg [CMG IV], 159 ff., with black and white reproductions of cod. Laur. LXXIV, 7 as plates I–XV). Apollonius of Kitium (*fl.* c. 50 B.C.) composed a *Commentary on Hippocrates' Joints*, and the best surviving texts are those from the tenth and eleventh century in Byzantium, perhaps compiled and re-edited by Nicetas (early tenth century). The illuminations of the cod. Laur. LXXIV, 7 seem to be contemporary with the Greek text of Apollonius' *Commentary*. Sarton, *Introduction*, I, 608. The best modern edition is J. Kollesch and F. Kudlien, eds., with translation (German) by J. Kollesch and D. Nickel, *Apollonii Citiensis In Hippocratis De articulis commentarius* (Berlin, 1965 [CMG XI 1, 1]), with thirty plates (black and white) of cod. Laur. LXXIV, 7 as an accompanying pamphlet. See also L. MacKinney, *Medical Illustrations in Medieval Manuscripts* (Berkeley, 1965), 89–91, with plate 91A (color: cod. Laur. LXXIV, 7, fol. 200). For the dependence of these picture cycles on Antique archetypes, see K. Weitzmann, *Ancient Book Illumination*, Martin Classical Lectures, 16 (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), 11 ff.

³Such hagiographic portraiture provides an especially rich typology of medical boxes. See P. J. Nordhagen, "The Frescoes of John VII (A.D. 705–707) in S. Maria Antiqua in Rome," *Acta ARNorv.* 3 (1968), 58. For two later boxes quite different from those cited by Nordhagen, see S. Pelekanides, *Kastoria*, I (in Greek) (Thessaloniki, 1953), pl. 26 (St. Panteleimon, Church of the Holy Anargyroi); and K. Weitzmann, "The Selection of Texts for Cyclic Illustration in Byzantine Manuscripts," *Byzantine Books and Bookmen*, Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium, 1971 (Washington, D.C., 1975), fig. 23 (St. Panteleimon; icon at Mt. Sinai). Occasionally, as in the icon just cited, a doctor-saint is shown in the act of healing one of his patients. Usually these "healings" are of a generic sort, morphologically dependent on Christ healing scenes from illustrated Gospels. However, some representations

antine art and Byzantine medicine remained distant. Much more interesting and illuminating for both are those rarer cases, specifically within the realm of supernatural healing, where the vehicle of the cure (whether pill or amulet) was itself an art object—where, in other words, art and medicine were one and the same. And nowhere was this phenomenon more pervasive or richer in its complexity than within the world of Early Byzantine pilgrimage.⁴

Pilgrimage played a central role in the life and culture of early Byzantium.⁵ Indeed, within a few decades of the foundation of the Empire the east Mediterranean had come alive with pious travelers. Among the first was Constantine's own mother, Helena, who journeyed to the Holy Land at her son's request to dedicate his newly built churches located at the sites identified with the Birth and Ascension of Christ: Bethlehem and the Mount of Olives. Thousands were to follow in a mass mobilization of body and spirit which grew uninterrupted until the Arab conquests of the seventh century.

Ultimately, each pilgrim was driven by the same basic conviction; namely, that the sanctity of holy people, holy objects, and holy places was somehow transferable through physical contact.⁶ They came not simply to see but to touch, to be close to the power of sanctity. For some, the hope was simply that this proximity would serve to intensify their faith. St. Jerome, for example, writes that when

seem to show patients with identifiable disorders. See, for example, Mt. Athos, Panteleimon cod. 2, fol. 197r: "Sts. Cosmas and Damian heal a man with dropsy" (S. M. Pelekanidis, P. C. Christou, C. Tsoumis, and S. N. Kadas, *The Treasures of Mount Athos*, 2 [Athens, 1975], no. 278). For a rare glimpse into a Byzantine doctor's office, see folio 10v of the fourteenth-century Nicholas Myrespus manuscript in Paris (BN gr. 2243) (T. Velmans, "Le Parisinus grecus 135 et quelques autres peintures de style gothique dans les manuscrits grecs à l'époque des Paléologues," *CahArch*, 17 [1967], fig. 26).

⁴For a more general discussion of art and Early Byzantine pilgrimage, see G. Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage Art*, Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Collection Publications, 5 (Washington, D.C., 1982).

⁵For an excellent introduction to Early Byzantine pilgrimage, see J. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades* (Warminster, 1977), "Introduction." See also, B. Kötting, *Peregrinatio religiosa* (Regensburg, 1950), *passim*; and E. D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire, A.D. 312–460* (New York, 1982), *passim*.

⁶John of Damascus writes of the True Cross (*Orth. Faith*, 4.11; *Fathers of the Church*, 37 [Washington, D.C., 1958], 165 ff.): "... that honorable and most truly venerable tree upon which Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice for us is itself to be adored, because it has been sanctified by contact with the sacred body and blood."

Paula first came before the wood of the cross "she fell down and worshipped . . . as if she could see the Lord hanging on it."⁷ For many others, however, pilgrimage was undertaken with the more specific goal of finding a miraculous cure at journey's end. Among them were the sick who filled the rows of beds in the hospice beside the Basilica of St. Mary in Jerusalem, and the infirm who for months would sleep on mats in the sanctuary of Sts. Cyrus and John in Menuthis, each night hoping for a miracle-working visitation from the shrine's holy doctors so that they could finally return home again, cured.⁸ A description of the shrine of St. Thekla at Seleucia, as it functioned at mid fifth century, suggests an atmosphere somewhere between that of the Mayo Clinic and the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception:

One never found her church without pilgrims, who streamed there from all sides; one group on account of the grandeur of the place in order to pray and to bring their offerings, and the other in order to receive healing and help against sickness, pain, and demons.⁹

That "healing and help" were indeed readily forthcoming was manifest to all who might enter the shrine; one need only have paused to listen for the recitation of the patron saint's most impressive *miracula* or have looked for the scores of precious *ex votos* which had been left behind to acknowledge them.¹⁰ Perhaps the most explicitly "medical" of the many pilgrim votives to have survived from early Byzantium is a series of tiny silver reliefs of eyes found in northern Syria and now preserved in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore. Some among them bear the inscription, "Lord help, amen," while others (e.g., fig. 1)¹¹ show the words, "In fulfillment of a vow"; all, however, have basically the same set of large staring eyes. Like their modern counterparts in the Orthodox churches of Greece, and their ancient counterparts excavated at pagan healing

⁷Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, 49.

⁸*Ibid.*, 84 (the anonymous pilgrim from Piacenza describing the Jerusalem hospice). For the sick sleeping on mats in the shrine (i.e., "incubation"), see H. Delehaye, "Les recueils antiques de miracles des saints," *AnalBoll*, 43 (1925), 11 f., 24 f., 64 f., and Kötting, *Peregrinatio*, 395.

⁹Basil of Seleucia, *Vita S. Teclae* (PG, 85, cols. 473ff. [vit., 1]).

¹⁰Delehaye, "Les recueils," 17 (for recitation of miracles in the shrine). Sophronius, *SS. Cyri et Ioannis, Miracula* (PG, 87.3, cols. 3423 ff.), *mir.* 69, describes a votive plaque at the entrance to the healing shrine of Sts. Cyrus and John at Menuthis, in northern Egypt: "I, John from Rome, have come here and have been healed by Sts. Cyrus and John of eight years of blindness, after I had suffered here unmoving." For votives at healing shrines, see Kötting, *Peregrinatio*, 399 f.

¹¹Acc. no. 57.1865.560; illustrated 1:1. See Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage*, fig. 38, for the "Lord help" type.



1.



2.



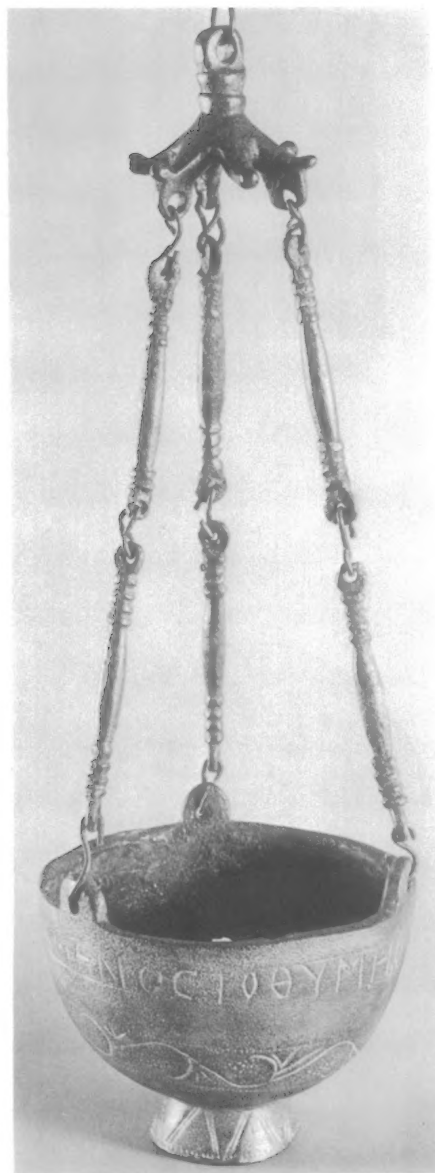
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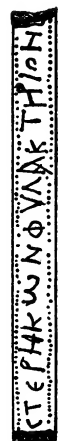
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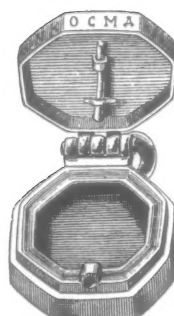
24.



25.



26.



27.



shrines around the Mediterranean (e.g., at the Asklepieion in Corinth), these simple, anonymous votives acknowledge a successful healing by showing that part of the body which was formerly diseased.¹² And to judge from the words of Theodoret, the practice was not at all unusual in early Byzantium:

Christians come to the martyrs to implore them to be their intercessors. That they obtained what they so earnestly prayed for is clearly proven by their votive gifts, which proclaim the healing. Some bring images of eyes, others feet, others hands, which sometimes are made of gold, sometimes of wood. . . .¹³

How and with what were such cures accomplished? These questions have been asked and answered by scholars of the caliber of Delehay and Kötting.¹⁴ Yet typically, each relied on textual evidence to the virtual exclusion of material remains, and in so doing failed to appreciate the integral role that art once played in effecting miraculous cures, and the instrumental role that it can still play in explicating the circumstances under which such cures were accomplished.¹⁵ In order to help establish a more balanced interpretation, I now propose to examine in detail miraculous healing as it was practiced at the shrine of St. Symeon the Younger, because for no other Early Byzantine pilgrim site is our textual evidence (the saint's *Vita*) so effectively complemented by our material evidence ("Symeon tokens")—the how by the what.¹⁶ This

¹² Unfortunately, there is nothing in the design of the reliefs to suggest the nature of the disease. Centers for the miraculous healing of the eyes were as well known in Early Byzantine times as they had been in antiquity. That closest to the findspot of these reliefs would likely have been the St. Thekla shrine at Seleucia (Kötting, *Peregrinatio*, 154).

¹³ Theodoret, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* 8.64 (I. Raeder, *Theodoret's graecarum affectionum curatio* [Leipzig, 1904; rpt. Stuttgart 1969], 1 ff.).

¹⁴ Delehay, "Les recueils," *passim*; and Kötting, *Peregrinatio*, 400 ff.

¹⁵ Similarly, those few art historians who have been attracted to pilgrimage art have paid far too little attention to textual evidence, and thus have usually missed the medico-amuletic essence of the genre. Instead, there has been a tendency to view the sort of pilgrim tokens and ampullae discussed below as little more than tourist souvenirs. They are thought to be cheap imitations of (lost) prototypes in precious metal whose iconography derives from (lost) mural archetypes at the shrine. For a recent review of received opinion among art historians, see R. J. Grigg, "The Images on the Palestinian Flasks as Possible Evidence of the Monumental Decoration of Palestinian Martyria," (diss., University of Minnesota, 1974).

¹⁶ P. van den Ven, *La vie ancienne de S. Syméon Stylite le Jeune* (521–592), SubsHag, 32 (Brussels, 1962 [I], 1970 [II]). For Symeon tokens, see J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Itinéraires archéologiques dans la région d'Antioche*, Bibliothèque de Byzantion, 4 (Brussels, 1967), 140 ff. (and *passim*, for the shrine in general).

examination will in turn serve as the basis for a reinterpretation of several categories of Early Byzantine amulets, which will be shown to be not merely apotropaic, but specifically medicinal.

The ruins of Symeon the Younger's shrine may still be seen atop his "Miraculous Mountain" (*Kut-chuk Djebel Semaan*), which rises above the Mediterranean some sixteen kilometers southwest of Antioch. Included in the complex were a cruciform church, a monastery, and a column, for this famous Symeon, who died in 592, had chosen the life of a stylite in imitation of his equally famous, homonymous predecessor of the fifth century.¹⁷ Evidence of what transpired on the Miraculous Mountain during Symeon's lifetime and in the decades immediately after his death consists of a long, contemporary *Vita* comprising more than 250 miracles, and, as their material complement, several dozen clay Symeon tokens of the sort illustrated in figure 2.¹⁸ Most, like this example, are between the size of a quarter and a half-dollar, and most show basically the same composition. At the center is Symeon's column topped by his bust-length portrait. To the left a monk climbs a ladder toward the saint, with a censer in his raised hands, while just below a second monk kneels in supplication, reaching forward to touch the column. Finally, above and to the right and left of the saint are a pair of flying angels bearing leafy victory crowns.

In a sense, the token identifies itself through the inscription which fills its circumference: "Blessing [i.e., *eulogia*] of St. Symeon of the Miraculous Mountain." "Of the Miraculous Mountain" is simply

For additions to Lafontaine-Dosogne's list, see *idem*, "Une eulogie inédite de St. Syméon Stylite le Jeune," *Byzantion*, 51 (1981), 631 ff., and notes 3 and 7; R. Camber, "A Hoard of Terracotta Amulets from the Holy Land," *Actes du XV^e Congrès International d'Études Byzantines*, Athens, September 1976, II, A (Athens, 1981), 104, fig. 15; and Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage*, figs. 22, 25, 29. Four additional specimens are in the J. Spier Collection, New York City.

¹⁷ For the Elder's shrine, see G. Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord*, I (Paris, 1953), 223 ff.; and for the Younger's, see van den Ven, *La vie ancienne*, I, 191 ff.; and J. Mécérian, "Les inscriptions du Mont Admirable," *Mélanges offerts au Père René Mousterde*, *MéUSJ*, 38 (1962), II, 298 ff.

¹⁸ Bo'obio, Museo di S. Colombano; illustrated 1:1. See G. Celi, "Cimeli Bobbiesi," *La civiltà cattolica*, 74 (1923), III, 429 ff. And for the others, see note 16 above.

It was van den Ven's view that Symeon's *Vita* was written by a contemporary; more recently (in his paper "The Gate of Chalke: The Bulletin Board of the Palace," delivered at the 1984 Dumbarton Oaks Spring Symposium), Paul Speck has suggested a dating for it to the second half of the seventh century. If Speck is correct, the "center of gravity" of the phenomena and objects discussed in this article (and, more generally, of the rise of the cult of images) would shift from the decades around A.D. 600 to the decades around and soon after the Arab Conquests.

the epithet which, for the Byzantines, distinguished the Younger from the Elder Symeon. Specifically, it identifies this Symeon's hill as literally being a source of miracles, since its soil had been sanctified via the column through contact with the saint. Such "sanctified hills" seem not to have been unusual; Theodoret, for example, describes one upon which a certain ascetic named James had stood—a hill which "... according to general belief received so powerful a blessing that people come from all sides and carry away [pieces of] earth in order to take them home as *prophylactica*."¹⁹ Significantly, Theodoret uses the word "blessing"—the same as that on the token—to describe the prophylactic quality which the earth of the hill had received from contact with the saint. Among the Jews of the Old Testament, the concept of "blessing" evoked by the word *eulogia* was thoroughly abstract, as in the pietistic acclamation, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel. . . ."²⁰ For early Christians, however, *eulogia* gradually came to be applied to blessed objects, such as bread, and eventually even to unblessed objects exchanged as gifts among the faithful. In the fifth century, for example, Akakios of Melitene sent a letter to Firmus of Caesarea and along with it, as a "blessing," a large fish.²¹ For the pilgrim the word *eulogia* held a special meaning somewhere between that common in the Old Testament, and the gift of the fish.²² It was the blessing conveyed—or more precisely, received—by contact with a holy place, a holy object, or a holy person. It could either be received directly and immaterially (through action), as by kissing the wood of the True Cross, or it could be conveyed indirectly and materially. In the latter case it would customarily come by way of a substance of neutral origin which itself had been blessed by direct contact—as, for example, through oil which had passed over the bones of a martyr. Theodoret's hill receives the immaterial blessing contact of the ascetic James, and once having received that contact itself becomes a material blessing which, in pieces, pilgrims can carry away as *prophylactica*.

That the same truth applies to Symeon's Miraculous Mountain and to the token in figure 2 is clear from the saint's *Vita*. The word *eulogia* (in the pil-

grim sense) appears nearly a dozen times among the text's 259 chapters, and in each instance it refers to a substance rather than to an action-variety of blessing. One time (chap. 100) it is water from the cistern near the column; another (chap. 116), bread blessed by the saint; and in still another instance (chap. 130), a bit of hair from Symeon's head. But most often, St. Symeon's *eulogia* came in the form of the reddish earth or "dust" collected from near the base of his column. This was "the *eulogia* made from dust blessed by him" (chap. 163), or "the dust of his *eulogia*" (chap. 232). And this, of course, is at once the material of his tokens and the stuff of his Miraculous Mountain.

Knowing what these tokens are made of raises the much more interesting question of their function. And here, the testimony of *Vita* and token is identical and unequivocal: they were medicinal. First, consider the evidence of the *Vita*: In two places, chapters 41 and 255, Symeon's biographer lists in clinical fashion the half-dozen different ways whereby the saint customarily exercised his healing powers. In chapter 255 the author is nearing the end of his narrative and so attempts an overview of Symeon in his role as holy doctor:

We shall not be tempted to list the innumerable healings that have been effected by the intermediation of St. Symeon, being weak and incapable of reporting them [all]; for sought cures were obtained as if they were pouring forth from an inexhaustible fountain. For many [the healing] was [accomplished] by [Symeon's] words; for certain others, by the mere invocation of his name; for others, by the imposition of his saintly staff; for others, by visions; and for others again, by the application of his holy dust.

Other passages in Symeon's *Vita* provide specific accounts of the medicinal application of the saint's holy dust. Chapter 115, for example, records the cure of a certain three-year-old boy in the village of Charandamas who suffered from severe constipation. Eventually the child's abdomen became distended to the point of bursting, which prompted his parents to invoke the name of St. Symeon and smear him with holy dust. Immediately, of course, the child found relief. In a similar vein, chapter 163 relates the story of a certain poor cripple in Antioch who is returned to health after having been rubbed with "the *eulogia* made from [Symeon's] blessed dust." In chapter 194 Symeon himself gives the following prescription to a man who has not a strand of hair on his entire body:

Take my dust and rub it all over your body, and as soon as you do, the Lord, through my humble service,

¹⁹Theodoret, *Historia religiosa* c. 21 (PG, 82, cols. 1431 ff.).

²⁰A. Stuiber, "Eulogia," *RAC*, VI (1966), cols. 900 ff.

²¹Firmus, *Epistolae* 30 (PG, 77, cols. 1481 ff.).

²²For an excellent survey of the various *eulogiai* current among sixth-century pilgrims, see the account of the anonymous pilgrim from Piacenza (Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, 79 ff.). See also, Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage*, 10 ff.

will make hair grow [on you] appropriate to the condition of [someone] your age.

These are three typical stories of cures effected through the agency of Symeon's dust. Almost invariably, the dust was applied externally—most often, it seems, dry, but occasionally (e.g., chap. 214) mixed with water or saliva to form a reddish paste. Moreover, the prescription was as consistent and conservative as it was simple, for unlike the well-known doctor-saints of the period—Cosmas and Damian, Cyrus and John, and Artemius—Symeon did not normally make individual diagnoses or recommend such exotic remedies as roasted crocodile, camel dung or Bithynian cheese mixed with wax.²³ The same reddish earth was used year in and year out to cure any number of disparate human afflictions, from deformities and broken bones, to fevers. In fact, the same agent was used to bring an ailing donkey back to life (chap. 148), to restore a vat of sour wine to its former sweetness (chap. 230), and even, on one occasion, to calm a storm at sea (chap. 235). There could be no doubt, in other words, that Symeon's *eulogia* was, from the pharmaceutical point of view, the pilgrim's cure-all.

That Symeon's *eulogia* tokens were specifically medicinal, and that their medical qualities were generic, are both explicitly stated in the inscriptions which some of these objects bear. Within the circular field of the token in figure 2, for example, are the words, "Receive, O Saint, the incense, and heal all," while another type of Symeon token, illustrated in figure 3, bears the word "health" (*hygieia*) across its face.²⁴ This token, like the first, shows Symeon's column topped by his bust portrait, a pair of flying angels above, and a monk with censer on a ladder at the left. On this token, however, the circular *eulogia* inscription does not appear, and the "heal-all" invocation has been supplanted by a tiny representation of the Baptism of Christ—a scene which, because it bears more on Symeon's theology than on his pharmacology, will not figure in this paper.²⁵ Rather, the point of most immediate interest is the word *hygieia*, which is spelled backwards and split by the column, slightly above the token's mid-level. That its letters are reversed, and that John incorrectly places his left hand on the head of Christ

instead of his right, simply result from the mechanical process whereby all such tokens were produced. Symeon himself, in chapter 231, uses the word *sphragis* or "seal" to describe a token's image because he understands that it was made with a stamp; the letters of *hygieia* are reversed in the impression simply because the die cutter failed to reverse them on the stamp.

But what of the word itself? Initially, one might assume that it was added simply to invoke that all-important state of renewed health which the possessor of the token would hope to achieve. But its original significance may well have been more profound. The word *hygieia* is found frequently among the minor arts of early Byzantium, and especially on objects of personal adornment, like rings and belts; it appears, for example, on the clasps of the well-known gold marriage belt at Dumbarton Oaks, which is roughly contemporary in date with the token (fig. 26).²⁶ There, Christ acting as officiating priest oversees the *dextrarum iunctio*, the joining of the right hands of the bridal couple. Surrounding the group is the inscription, "From God, concord, grace, health." These words are as essential to the meaning of the belt as is the image, since they serve to invoke from God a threefold blessing on the marriage. By analogy, the word *hygieia* on the token serves to invoke from Symeon the blessing of health on the suppliant. But it may have done even more than that. After all, the token differs fundamentally from the belt clasp insofar as its very substance is instrumental to the realization of the blessing. In this respect, it—or rather, the stamp that produced it—belongs to the same tradition as a Late Antique doctor's stamp published more than fifty years ago by Franz Joseph Dölger (fig. 4).²⁷ Running clockwise around its circumference is the word *hygieia*, while at its center is a *theta* which, according to Dölger's persuasive argument, stands for *thanatos*. Between health and death, literally enclosing and trapping death, is the *pentalpha*, one of the most powerful amuletic signs in the Late Antique lexicon of magic. The *pentalpha* was the de-

²³ For an entertaining survey of such exotic cures, see H. J. Magoulias, "The Lives of Saints as Sources of Data for the History of Byzantine Medicine in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries," *BZ*, 57 (1964), 144 ff.

²⁴ Houston, Menil Foundation Collection, II.J1; illustrated 1:1. See Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage*, 34 f., fig. 25.

²⁵ For a discussion of this scene, see *ibid.*, 35.

²⁶ M. C. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, Volume II: Jewelry, Enamels, and Art of the Migration Period* (Washington, D.C., 1965), no. 38.

²⁷ Basel, History Museum; illustrated ca. 1:1. See F. J. Dölger, *Antike und Christentum*, I (Münster, 1929), 47 ff. Note that the letters on the stamp have not been cut in reverse. The failure to reverse letters and/or words is a common, random phenomenon among Byzantine stamping and sealing implements—with the exception of the more "legalistic" and "official" lead sealings.

vice of the legendary Solomonic seal; it was engraved on the signet ring given by God to King Solomon in order that he might seal and thereby control the power of demons.²⁸ On the stamp, *hygieia* and *pentalpha* together seal and control *thanatos*; more importantly, their impression conveyed that same magical power to the doctor's pill. The analogy to our Symeon token, both in means of manufacture and in medicinal use, seems inescapable, although for the Symeon pill the impressed word only served to complement the healing power already inherent in Symeon's blessed earth.²⁹

As for extant Symeon stamps—the functional descendants of the doctor's stamp illustrated in our figure 4—at least two may be cited: One, published in 1962 by Jean Mécérian, was found on the Miraculous Mountain itself, in the ruins of the gatehouse.³⁰ Approximately ten centimeters in diameter and made of basalt, it bears inscriptions on both of its faces: "Seal [*sphragis*] of the Holy Thaumaturge, Symeon," and (much abbreviated), "Jesus Christ, Son of God."³¹ The second implement, preserved in the Cabinet des Médailles, Paris, is also made of stone, and although it is not inscribed with Symeon's name or epithet, it too should probably be assigned to the Miraculous Mountain, since its iconography closely matches that of extant clay *eulogiai* issued there (fig. 5).³² One surface shows a monk climbing a ladder toward the saint, who appears *en buste* at the top of his column with victory angels flying in from left and right. At the base of the ladder is a large censer, while on the opposite side is a frontal standing figure—assumedly Symeon's disciple, Konon—in a pointed hat and cape, holding a staff and labeled "sole friend" (*MONOPHILE*).³³ The other side of the stamp shows a

crude iconic portrait of the Virgin with the Christ Child on her lap; its inscription, "Holy Mary," indicates for it an Early Byzantine dating.³⁴ This device, too, is matched on at least a few extant clay tokens from the Miraculous Mountain.³⁵ Indeed, that an image of "Holy Mary" should occasionally complement (or even supplant) that of Symeon on his medicinal *eulogiai* is hardly surprising, since her powers were invoked along with his (and Christ's) in the performance of miraculous cures—including that whereby Konon was brought back from the dead.³⁶

The inscriptions on both variant token types (figs. 2, 3) corroborate the evidence of the *Vita*; namely, that Symeon's blessed earth was medicinal in its intent and general in its applicability. Yet, the words that these objects bear have something additional to reveal of the specific circumstances under which their generic medicinal powers were brought to bear. Recall the invocation that appears on the token illustrated in figure 2: "Receive, O Saint, the incense, and heal all." Incense—or more specifically, the offering of incense to the saint—is as prominent textually in this invocation as it is visually in the iconography of this and of most other Symeon tokens. Here, we see a man climbing toward the saint with an upright censer in both hands, while in figure 3 an analogously placed suppliant holds a swinging censer in his right hand. Obviously, invocation and iconography mirror one another, and just as obviously, the significance they share for these tokens depends on how we interpret incense, a substance and process which in Early Byzantine Christianity had several variant meanings reflective of its several variant uses. In private piety one of its main uses was as a propitiatory sacrifice offered in conjunction with intense prayer. To cite one typical illustration close in time and place to St. Symeon: Evagrius tells the story of a certain holy man named Zosimas, who happened to be in Caesarea in 526 when a terrible earthquake struck Antioch:

Zosimas, at the very moment of the overthrow of Antioch, suddenly became troubled, uttered lamenta-

²⁸C. C. McCown, *The Testament of Solomon* (Leipzig, 1922), 10*. See also note 67, below.

²⁹The supposed efficacy of "consumable words" is no more clearly documented than in Julius Africanus' prescription for keeping wine from turning sour: write the words of Psalm 34.8 ("O taste and see that the Lord is good") on an apple and throw it into the cask (see Dölger, *Antike*, 21).

³⁰Mécérian, "Les inscriptions," 304, pl. II, 1.

³¹In fact, the raised matrix of the side bearing the *sphragis* inscription is only about 5 cm. across, making it only slightly larger than the token from Bobbio illustrated in figure 2.

³²Unpublished; my line drawing is reproduced ca. 1:1. The piece is about 1.5 cm. thick, and is made of a hard, dark stone (basalt?).

³³For such a censer, see O. Wulff, *Altchristliche Bildwerke*, Königliche Museen zu Berlin, Beschreibung der Bildwerke der christlichen Epochen, 2, 1 (Berlin, 1909), no. 977. "Sole friend" is otherwise unattested on Symeon (or any other) *eulogiai*. Konon's miraculous resurrection, one of Symeon's most famous miracles, is described in chapter 129 of the *Vita*. Konon appears,

usually labeled *KONON*, on many of the extant mid-Byzantine "eulogiai" of St. Symeon the Younger (e.g., our fig. 7).

³⁴The chronology of epithets accompanying portraits of the Virgin will be discussed by Anna Kartsonis in her forthcoming book, *Anastasis: The Making of an Image*. "Holy Mary," as distinct from "Mother of God" or "Theotokos," is confined to the pre-Iconoclastic period.

³⁵Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Itinéraires archéologiques*, figs. 98 ff.

³⁶*Vita* chaps. 129, 141, 226; and Mécérian, "Les inscriptions," 318 ff.

tions and deep sighs, and then shedding such a profusion of tears as to bedew the ground, called for a censer, and having fumed the whole place where they were standing, throws himself upon the ground, propitiating God with prayers and supplications.³⁷

Both in a literal and in a symbolic sense, smoke and prayer were conjoined for Zosimas as they rose toward heaven; one an offering to intensify and facilitate the request conveyed in the other.

That incense shares the same meaning for these tokens as for Zosimas, and that both reflect a real aspect of contemporary piety, are corroborated by a small but important group of inscribed bronze censers from Early Byzantine Sicily (fig. 6).³⁸ Most show slight variations on the inscription, "God, who received the incense of the Holy Prophet Zacharias, receive this [incense]." The allusion, of course, is to the story of the father of John the Baptist, who, according to the first chapter of Luke, entered the Temple to burn incense before the altar. As he did he prayed, and at that moment an angel appeared before him with the words: "Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard. . . ."

The iconography of these tokens, their inscriptions, Evagrius, and extant censers together seem to be painting a single coherent image—one wherein ailing pilgrims would offer Symeon incense in propitiation as they invoked his intercessory aid and the healing power of his *eulogia*. We imagine lines of pathetic suppliants, each waiting his turn to climb the ladder and, with censer in hand, to put his case before the holy doctor. However, to judge from the evidence of Symeon's *Vita*, our imagination would seem to be deceiving us, for while there are a number of references to the burning of incense in the *Vita*, only once is it being offered directly to the saint at the top of the column (chap. 222), and in that one case the offering is expressly refused. In other words, Symeon's biographer neither states nor implies that the saint customarily or even occasionally gave audience to suppliants with censers—which seems to leave us with a fundamental conflict between our material evidence on one hand and our textual evidence on the other, between token and *Vita*. But in fact, this is only an apparent conflict, since it is not inherent in the evidence at all, but lies rather in an assumption

which we enforce on that evidence; namely, that the scene on the token is to be understood as reflecting the experienced reality at the shrine. To reconcile the two, we need only discard that assumption and look away from Symeon's column; we need only suppose, in other words, that the censuring suppliant is not at the shrine at all, but that he is offering up his incense prayer from another location.

And here, through this unlikely but in fact necessary supposition, token and *Vita* fall into harmony with one another. Consider the following three cures. Chapter 53 relates the story of a youth from Daphne who is suddenly struck blind; discovering this, his parents light lamps and throw on incense, imploring the help of Emmanuel in the name of St. Symeon. Chapter 70 describes an unnamed victim of an unspecified disease; he lights a lamp in his house and throws on incense, praying quietly and saying, "Christ, God of Your Servant Symeon of the Miraculous Mountain, have pity on me." And finally, chapter 231 relates the story of a priest from the village of Basileia; his third son, near death with a fever, begs his father to take him to St. Symeon. His father replies, "St. Symeon, my son, has the power to come to visit you here, and you will be healed, and you will live." With these words of the priest, the young man cries out, "St. Symeon, have pity on me," and then tells his father to get up quickly, throw on incense, and pray, for the Servant of God, St. Symeon, is before him. In each instance the scenario is basically the same: a devotee of St. Symeon falls ill while away from the shrine, but instead of traveling to the saint, he induces the saint to come to him—to perform "bi-location"—by burning incense, lighting lamps, and by offering a fervent prayer for healing.³⁹

It seems, then, that the words and images on these tokens should be taken neither in a strictly literal sense nor in a strictly symbolic sense. There was a real suppliant, he did pray for healing, and he did offer incense to the saint; but this in all probability took place away from the Miraculous Mountain, as part of a private healing ritual. Thus the suppliant is a participant in the iconography, but only at one

³⁷ *Ecclesiastical History* 4.7 (Bohn's Ecclesiastical Library [London, 1854], 255 ff.).

³⁸ Syracuse, Museo Archeologica (P. Orsi, *Sicilia bizantina*, I [Rome, 1942], 171 ff., pl. XIIc). See, more recently, A. M. Fallico, "Recenti ritrovamenti di bronzetti bizantini," *Siculorum gymnasium*, 21 (1968), 70 ff.

³⁹ For a bi-location healing performed by Sts. Cosmas and Damian (*mir.* 13), see Delehaye, "Les recueils," 16, and note 45 below. Symeon's *Vita* describes the process of healing as it existed during his lifetime; the shrine, however, continued to function long after his death in 592. Perhaps lights and incense were then used at the shrine to induce Symeon's healing presence much as they had formerly been used away from the shrine for the same purpose.

remove, since his identity is subsumed by anonymous counterparts who act out the spiritual and, in part, the physical reality of his piety. His supplicatory relationship to his intercessor, St. Symeon, is visualized in the figure kneeling beside the column,⁴⁰ his incense offering is presented quite graphically (though in symbolic terms) on the ladder above, and the prayer itself is spelled out to the right of the column.

Suppliant, censer, and saint, entities which did not customarily converge in the experienced reality of the public shrine, here meet in a sort of private, liturgical reality on the face of a Symeon *eulogia*.⁴¹ Moreover, it is clear that the very substance of that imagery, the *eulogia* itself, had an instrumental role to play in the consummation of the healing rite portrayed on it.⁴² This only makes sense, and, in fact, is at least implicit in the list of healing techniques enumerated in chapters 41 and 255 of the *Vita*. Were the pilgrim actually at the shrine, he would have had the option of receiving the saint's blessing words or his healing touch, but away from the shrine the pilgrim must necessarily rely on some blessed intermediary to accomplish the same effect. In essence, this was the medicine he was obliged to take when he couldn't reach (or remain with) the doctor. Recall the story of the constipated three-year-old who was smeared with medicinal dust in his native village of Charandamas, and the paralytic who was dusted and healed in Antioch. In fact, there is not one miracle in the entire *Vita* of the saint where a medicinal *eulogia* is described as being used at the shrine itself; rather, they were given out there to accomplish their cures somewhere else. Consider the scenario evoked by chapter 231. A priest brings his second-born son to St. Symeon to be cured of a terrible disease. Symeon blesses the young man, but then sends him home to await his miraculous healing. The father is troubled and suggests that they stay near the saint a bit longer, since, "the presence at your side assures us a more complete cure." At this Symeon becomes annoyed,

scolds the priest for his lack of faith, and sends him on his way with these words: "The power of God . . . is efficacious everywhere. Therefore, take this *eulogia* made of my dust and depart. . . ." ⁴³

The images on these tokens, their inscriptions, and the healing miracles recounted in Symeon's *Vita* converge in a single coherent medico-religious phenomenon wherein each has a complimentary role to play—with the exception, perhaps, of the image itself. After all, that the iconography found on these tokens is explicable does not explain why it was put there in the first place. Certainly blessed earth could effect miraculous cures all by itself; why, then, the image?

Recall the miracle narrated in chapter 231 of the *Vita*. A priest brings his second son to Symeon to be healed; the saint blesses the boy but then sends him home to await the cure. A sceptical father does not wish to leave, but is persuaded to do so by the following statement from Symeon, the first half of which was quoted above:

⁴³No sooner do father and son arrive home than Symeon appears, disguised, in a vision. He puts this question to the priest: "What do you prefer, this *eulogia* that Symeon has sent you, or his right hand?" To which the priest responds, "Don't be angry, Lord, for great is the power of his *eulogia*, but I was seeking his right hand." At this point Symeon extends his right hand and gives the priest his clay *eulogia*, then, revealing his true identity, scolds him once again for his lack of faith. This desire for "the right hand" may explain why palm prints appear so frequently and so clearly on the back sides of Early Byzantine clay tokens (see Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage*, 38 f., figs. 29a, b). There is additional evidence of how Symeon's earthen *eulogiai* were dispersed. Chapter 163 of the *Vita* describes Symeon's practice of giving blessed dust as "a favor . . . to the poor, for their subsistence." The poor in turn give out the *eulogiai* (here, specifically, in Antioch) and thereby the Lord "heals the world." According to chapter 181, a woman places in her bag "the *eulogia* that she got from the saint," while chapter 196 describes a specific building at the shrine for the storage of *eulogiai* (of Symeon's hair). According to chapter 232, a monk attached to the shrine who is traveling to Constantinople on business carries with him pieces of Symeon's hair and "the dust of his *eulogia*," with which he heals the praetorian prefect. Finally, miracle 54 of St. Martha (see note 45 below) describes a Georgian monk as leaving the shrine of St. Symeon with several image-bearing clay tokens. The stamps for the manufacture of clay *eulogiai* were likely made for and controlled by the monastic community which operated the shrine. At the shrine of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, for example, blessed wax was distributed to those undergoing incubation in the church during the all-night Saturday vigil (L. Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian* [Leipzig/Berlin, 1907], *mir.* 30). Molds (in fact, an entire workshop) for the production of clay ampullae for blessed water have been discovered at the Menas shrine in Egypt (see K. M. Kaufman, *Die heilige Stadt der Wüste* [Munich, 1924], 195 ff). Not surprisingly, those *eulogiai* bearing words or images are almost invariably "impersonal," and thus generically applicable to any suppliant and any disease. (For a unique pair of tokens made expressly for a certain Constantine, see Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage*, figs. 22 and 29a.) Multiple surviving specimens from the same mold are not uncommon (cf. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Itinéraires archéologiques*, figs. 82, 83).

⁴⁰Compare analogous suppliants as they appear beside the True Cross on the well-known ampullae in Monza and Bobbio (A. Grabar, *Ampoules de Terre Sainte* [Paris, 1958], *passim*); for "vicarious" participation in pilgrimage iconography, see Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage*, 24 f.

⁴¹These tokens clearly contradict conventional art-historical wisdom which would trace pilgrimage iconography back to lost mural models at the shrines. And in any event, no evidence exists that the shrine of Symeon the Younger (among others) ever had figurative mural decoration.

⁴²That clay is the object's *raison d'être* obviously contradicts the notion that this medium was chosen for reasons of economy.

The power of God . . . is efficacious everywhere. Therefore, take this *eulogia* made of my dust, depart, and when you look at the imprint of our image, it is us that you will see.

Symeon is here offering the priest two quite different kinds of assurance that his son's cure will indeed eventually be accomplished. One, of course, is the blessed dust, which assumedly the priest will recognize as the saint's typical, highly efficacious curative agent. The other, however, is the saint's image impressed on that dust; somehow the anxiety of the priest should be lessened by knowing that when he and his son get home and look at that impression, they will, in effect, be confronted with a vision of the saint himself. But how can this be reassuring?

The answer comes later in the same chapter, when the priest's third son falls ill. Naturally, he asks that he be taken to the Miraculous Mountain, but his father recalls the words of the saint and replies, "St. Symeon, my son, has the power to come to visit you here, and you will be healed, and you will live." With this the young man gasps, then calls out, "St. Symeon, have pity on me." He then turns to his father and cries, "Get up quickly, throw on incense, and pray, for the servant of God, St. Symeon, is before me. . . ." With these words Symeon appears to the boy in a vision, battles with the demon that possesses him, and soon restores the youth to good health. Other miracles, though in less detail, suggest the same scenario; namely, that a vision of the saint was instrumental to the miraculous cure, and that this vision might be induced by a man-made representation of the saint. In chapter 118, for example, a hemorrhaging woman from Cilicia invokes Symeon's aid with the words, "If only I see your image I will be saved," while chapter 163 describes a healing accomplished in Antioch by means of blessed dust:

Instantly the paralytic was healed . . . by the inter-mediation of his saintly servant Symeon, whom he saw with his own eyes under the aspect of a long-haired monk, who extended his hand and put him upright. . . .

It is clear that for these people seeing was essential to healing, to making real and effective Symeon's miraculous, healing presence at their side.⁴⁴ And

⁴⁴ As incubation was instrumental to healing at the most famous of early Byzantium's holy doctor shrines (e.g., those of Cosmas and Damian, Cyrus and John, and Artemius), so a dream-vision was instrumental to successful incubation. And the fact that the healing saint is said to appear "in his customary manner" (e.g., Cosmas and Damian, *mir.* 1), strongly suggests that

chapter 231 of the *Vita* leaves no doubt that the image stamped on the earthen *eulogia* was itself instrumental to the "seeing" of the saint. In Symeon's own words, "When you regard the imprint of our image, it is us that you will see."⁴⁵

The saint's image, the pilgrim's invocation, the pair of suppliants, the censer, the red clay, the concepts of *eulogia*, bi-location, and visitation, and the magic of *hygieia*; these were all multiple facets of a single medico-religious phenomenon through which one segment of the population of early Byzantium believed that it was effectively treating its diseases. Pilgrim tokens like those illustrated in figures 2 and 3 were at once the distillation of and the catalyst for that phenomenon. Indeed, there is no clearer indication of the subtle cohesion with which they responded to their medico-religious function than to contrast them with their "imitations" of later centuries. Image-bearing, earthen *eulogia* reached their peak of popularity in the later sixth and seventh centuries; a fairly rapid decline seems to have set in soon thereafter. Yet, like many another product of Early Byzantine culture, the Symeon *eulogia* was destined to be exhumed and revived centuries later, during the mid-Byzantine period. For with the reoccupation of the region of Antioch in the later tenth century, the Miraculous Mountain and its pilgrim trade were revitalized, and pilgrim token designs popularized before the Arab Conquest were consciously imitated (fig. 7).⁴⁶

representations of the saint (whether on tokens, or as icons or murals) were instrumental to the evocation and confirmation of that vision. See Delehay, "Les recueils," 16; and Kötting, *Peregrinatio*, 217 f.

⁴⁵ References to image-bearing, consumable *eulogiai* are not confined to the *Vita* of St. Symeon. Miracle 16 of St. Artemius (Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Varia graeca sacra*) relates the story of a suppliant undergoing incubation who wakes up with a wax seal in his hand bearing the saint's portrait. The previous night the holy doctor had appeared to him in a dream, and had given him the seal "to drink." The patient is cured through the application of the melted wax. Miracles 54, 55 in the *Vita* of St. Martha (van den Ven, *La vie ancienne*) narrate the story of a certain Georgian monk who leaves the shrine of St. Symeon with several image-bearing clay tokens. On the way home he begins to doubt the saintliness of Symeon, and throws all but one token (which escapes his attention) into a fire. Suddenly, his arms become white from leprosy; he asks forgiveness of the saint, rubs his arms with the blessed earth, and is healed. Miracle 13 of Sts. Cosmas and Damian (Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*) tells the story of a member of the military who is sent to Laodicea, taking with him an "icon," which is apparently identical with the blessed wax later used to treat his sick wife. See E. Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images in the Age Before Iconoclasm," *DOP*, 8 (1954), 148.

⁴⁶ For the revitalization of the Miraculous Mountain in the mid-Byzantine period, see van den Ven, *La vie ancienne*, 214* ff. Figure 7: Houston, Menil Foundation Collection, II.J4; illustrated 1:1. See Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage*, fig. 30, 39 f. It is

Superficially, this typical mid-Byzantine descendant shares much in common with its Early Byzantine ancestor (fig. 2); its iconography appears to be much the same and its inscription is virtually identical. Yet over the centuries, much had changed: gone are the kneeling suppliant, the man on the ladder, the censer, and the invocation—gone, in other words, is the “incense prayer” and the concept of bi-location it evoked. We see instead Symeon’s disciple Konon on the left and his mother Martha on the right, each turning toward Symeon’s column as though an intercessor in a Deësis; they have, in effect, not only physically supplanted the suppliants, they have interposed themselves spiritually between suppliant and stylite. Above, the angels still appear but they have been altered in a most telling way. By the well-established canons of Late Antique victory iconography, they ought to be carrying either crowns (figs. 2, 3) or palm fronds to the victorious “athlete of Christ,” St. Symeon. But instead, each carries a small martyr’s cross, as if about to hand it to the saint. Yet, iconographic substitutions such as these are only symptoms of what was a very profound transformation in the function of the object, and thereby in its very genre. For in fact, what appears in figure 7 is not a clay token at all, but rather a cast lead pendant whose suspension loop has broken away.⁴⁷ It is, in other words, an object which by its very nature cannot possibly convey the medicinal earthen “blessing” of the Miraculous Mountain.

What these mid-Byzantine lead medallions still had to offer, however, was the inherent power of their image—the same power which Theodoret ascribed to representations of Symeon Stylites the Elder († 459) more than five hundred years earlier:

Of [pilgrimage from] Italy it is unnecessary to speak, since they say that this man [Symeon the Elder] has become so famous in Rome, the greatest city, that they have set up small images of him in the vestibules of all the workshops for the warding off of danger and as a means of protection.⁴⁸

inscribed: “Blessing of St. Symeon of the Miraculous [Mountain], Amen.”

⁴⁷For the genre, see P. Verdier, “A Medallion of Saint Symeon the Younger,” *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, 67, 1 (1980), 17 ff. For a mid-Byzantine mold for the casting of lead Symeon pendants, see J. Lassus, “Un moule à eulogies de Saint Syméon le Jeune,” *Mon Piot*, 51 (1960), 149 f., fig. 6.

⁴⁸*Historia religiosa*, 26.11 (H. Leitzmann, *Das Leben des heiligen Symeon Stylites*, TU, 32, 4 [Leipzig, 1908], 1 ff.).

Indeed, it was this belief in the power of images which made it inevitable that pilgrimage iconography, popularized and disseminated through the idiom of the *eulogia*, should come to enjoy its own existence and evolution independent of blessed substance.⁴⁹ And it is hardly surprising to discover that some of these pilgrimage-generated images were thought to possess specifically medicinal powers. In chapter 118 of the *Vita*, for example, is the story of a woman from Cilicia who, after having been purged of a demon by St. Symeon, returns home and there sets up an icon of the saint. This image, even though it was never blessed by Symeon, performs a variety of miracles, including cures, “because the Holy Spirit which inhabits Symeon covers it with its shadow”; thus, a hemorrhaging woman can invoke Symeon’s power with the words, “If only I see your image I will be saved.”⁵⁰ Similarly, there is recorded among the *miracula* of Cosmas and Damian one (no. 15) wherein a pious woman is cured of colic simply by consuming plaster fragments scraped from the frescoed portraits of those holy doctors which had been painted on the walls of her house.⁵¹

Yet, it is one thing to know that some pilgrimage-generated imagery could sometimes be medicinal, even without the aid of accompanying blessed substance, and quite another to identify specific, extant objects which by their imagery may be said to have been medicinal in intent at their point of manufacture. Most simply stated, the problem is to identify implements of supernatural healing among the much larger categories of pilgrimage-related amulets and votives.⁵²

One such implement—a true “medical amulet”—is represented by our figures 8 to 10.⁵³ These

⁴⁹For some examples, see Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage*, 40 ff.

⁵⁰On the implications of this passage for the icon cult, see Kitzinger, “The Cult of Images,” 117 f., 144 f.

⁵¹Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*; and Kitzinger, “The Cult of Images,” 107, 148.

⁵²Ever since Gustave Schlumberger’s pioneering study of 1892, “Amulettes byzantins anciens destinés à combattre les maléfices et maladies” (*REG*, 5, [1892], 73 ff.), Byzantinists have tended to blur the distinction between amulets that were intended to be only generally efficacious, and those among them which were intended to act specifically against, for example, the Evil Eye, stomach pains or infertility. Students of Greco-Egyptian amulets have evolved a much richer and far more precise typology, in part of course, because of the greater number and variety of objects with which they deal. See C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets, Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (Ann Arbor, 1950); and A. Delatte and P. Derchain, *Les intailles magiques gréco-égyptiennes* (Paris, 1964).

⁵³Figure 8: Fouquet Collection, Cairo; illustrated 1:1. Found in Egypt. Inscriptions: Psalm 90; *Heis Theos*. Iconography: As-

are three of more than a dozen surviving examples of a type of amuletic armband produced in the east Mediterranean (i.e., Syria-Palestine and/or Egypt) in the sixth and seventh centuries.⁵⁴ The group is distinguished by recurrent inscriptions and images, and by a ribbon-like design highlighted by incised, figurative medallions; finer specimens, like the three here illustrated, are of silver. That the iconographic roots of these armbands lie in the pilgrim trade is clear from: (1) the fact that their version of the Women at the Tomb (figs. 8–10) includes architectural elements of the Holy Sepulchre Shrine (e.g., the “grills”); and (2), the striking similarity that exists between the choice and configuration of their scenes and those that appear on the well-known Palestinian metal ampullae preserved in Monza and Bobbio.⁵⁵ For example, six of the eight medallions on the Fouquet armband (fig. 8: Ascension, Annunciation, Nativity, Baptism, Crucifixion, and the Women at the Tomb) closely match those found on the reverse of Monza ampulla 2 (fig. 11).⁵⁶ Similarly, that these armbands were intended to be at least generally amuletic is clear from

their recurrent use of the apotropaic verse from Psalm 90, “He that dwells in the help of the Highest . . .,” and from their inclusion of the so-called holy rider and of such patently magical symbols as the *pentalpha* (figs. 8, 9).⁵⁷ Yet, what has thus far escaped notice is that the magic they were supposed to convey was specifically medicinal.⁵⁸ The evidence is of two sorts. First, there is the recent addition to the group of an armband bearing the word *Hygieia* on its holy rider medallion (fig. 10).⁵⁹ And second, there is the fact, somehow hitherto unnoticed, that several of the best-known members of the group, including our figures 8 and 9, show the Chnoubis, one of Antiquity’s most popular medical “gem amulets”—and one long recognized as specifically effective in the cure of abdominal disorders.⁶⁰ The *Peri lithon* of Socrates and Dionysius, for example, gives the following instruction:

Engrave on it [a kind of onyx] a serpent coil with the upper part or head of a lion, with rays. Worn thus it

cension, Annunciation, Nativity, Chnoubis, Baptism, Crucifixion, Women at the Tomb, Holy Rider. See J. Maspero, “Bracelets-amulettes d’époque byzantine,” *Annales du service des antiquités de l’Égypte*, 9 (1908), 246 ff., fig. 1. Figure 9: Egyptian Museum, Cairo; illustrated ca. 1:1. Found in Egypt. Inscription: Psalm 90. Iconography: Annunciation, Nativity, Trinity (?), Baptism, Chnoubis, Crucifixion, Women at the Tomb, Holy Rider. See *ibid.*, 250 ff., figs. 2–5, pls. at end of volume. Figure 10: New York, J. Spier Collection; illustrated ca. 1:1. Inscriptions: Psalm 90; *Trisagion*; *Theotokos Boethei Anna, Charis*. Iconography: Women at the Tomb, Virgin and Child, Holy Rider. Unpublished. I would like to thank Mr. Spier for these photographs, and for permission to publish them.

⁵⁴For the group in general, see Maspero, “Bracelets-amulettes,” 246 ff.; and M. Piccirillo, “Un braccialetto cristiano della regione di Betlem,” *Liber Annuus*, 29 (1979), 244 ff. (with illustrations of several specimens). For additional, related examples, see J. Strzykowski, *Koptische Kunst*, Catalogue général des antiquités Égyptiennes du Musée du Caire (Vienna, 1904), 331 f.; Wulff, *Altchristliche Bildwerke*, no. 1109; and Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, no. 321.

⁵⁵For the Holy Sepulchre, see J. Wilkinson, “The Tomb of Christ: An Outline of its Structural History,” *Levant*, 1 (1969), 83 ff.; and for the ampullae, see Grabar, *Ampoules, passim*, and the following note.

⁵⁶Monza, Treasury of the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist; illustrated 1:1. Tin-lead ampulla for sanctified oil. See *ibid.*, pl. V. The only scene without a match is the Visitation, at the upper right of the ampulla. For the dating, localization, iconography, and function of these ampullae, see, in addition to Grabar, J. Engemann, “Palästinische Pilgerampullen im F. J. Dölger Institut in Bonn,” *JbAChr*, 16 (1973), 5 ff.; Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage*, 20 ff.; and, most recently, L. Kötzsche-Breitenbruch, “Pilgerandenken aus dem heiligen Land,” *Vivarium: Festschrift Theodor Klauser zum 90. Geburtstag*, *JbAChr*, Ergänzungsband, 11 (1984), 229 ff.

⁵⁷For Psalm 90.1 and the holy rider, see Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 5, nos. 294 ff. The holy rider in figure 10 differs from the more common sort illustrated in Bonner (and appearing, for example, in the central medallion in the front view of fig. 9) insofar as he does not impale an evil, prostrate figure or beast. This more stately version likely derives from traditional *adventus* iconography as it was adapted for Christ in the Entry into Jerusalem—a scene which appears with remarkable frequency on Early Byzantine amulets (e.g., Wulff, *Altchristliche Bildwerke*, no. 825). This was the one biblical episode wherein Christ was, in effect, a “holy rider”; moreover, the victorious nature of the event was itself fully appropriate to amulets, which necessarily relied on the invocation of Christ’s power. Usually, as here, the iconography is reduced to a single figure (holding a large cross) and the animal that carries him; often, though not here, that animal is characterized as a donkey by its long ears (cf. our fig. 23). Both types of holy rider appear on one armband in our group; see W. Froehner, *Collection de la comtesse R. de Béarn* (Paris, 1905), 10.

⁵⁸For the most recent statement of received opinion, see E. Kitzinger, “Christian Imagery: Growth and Impact,” *Age of Spirituality: A Symposium*, ed. K. Weitzmann (New York, 1980), 151 f. (illustrating the armbands in our figures 8 and 9).

⁵⁹Remarkably similar in general design and apparent function is a bronze medico-amuletic *tabella ansata* (?) in the British Museum which shows a stately rider (not Christ) and his attendant, three snakes, and the inscriptions: *Heis Theos* and *Hygieia*. Dalton assigned the piece, which came from Tyre, to the sixth century, and suggested that it was made “to bring health or luck.” See O. M. Dalton, *Catalogue of Early Christian Antiquities and Objects from the Christian East in the . . . British Museum* (London, 1901), no. 543.

⁶⁰On the Chnoubis, see Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 54 ff.; and Delatte and Derchain, *Intailles magiques*, 54 ff. There is an unpublished armband with the Chnoubis in the Benaki Museum, Athens (no. 11472). This was kindly brought to my attention by L. Bouras.

prevents pain in the stomach; you will easily digest every kind of food.⁶¹

Most often the Chnoubis takes the form it has at the bottom center of the central medallion in figure 8; namely, as stipulated above, that of a lion-headed snake with nimbus and rays—either seven for the planets or twelve for the signs of the zodiac. Indeed, this Chnoubis closely matches that of a jasper intaglio in the Cabinet des Médailles, on whose back side are the words, “Guard in health the stomach of Proclus” (fig. 12).⁶² On the other hand, the Chnoubis which fills the central medallion of our figure 9, second view, is of a more unusual, highly abstract sort; although its seven rays are immediately recognizable, its tail is now much withered and its lion head, within a bean-shaped nimbus, seems almost more human than leonine. Nevertheless, its iconographic identity and functional significance remain unmistakable: not only were these armbands specifically medicinal, they were very likely designed specifically to treat distress in the abdomen.

This group of medico-amuletic armbands, once recognized for what it is, holds the key to the identification of several other related types of implements for supernatural healing among the arts of early Byzantium. Consider, for example, the octagonal silver ring, of seventh- or eighth-century date, illustrated in figure 13.⁶³ It appears to have been designed as a condensed, “finger-sized” version of an armband, for not only are its technique and medium the same, its hoop bears the familiar words from Psalm 90, while its (single) incised medallion shows—in even more degenerate form—the armband’s Chnoubis. Actually, this ring’s Chnoubis bears closer comparison with the “mummified,” human-headed form that the creature takes on some earlier amuletic gems (fig. 14).⁶⁴ Besides the face and

seven rays,⁶⁵ note that on both amulets the creature is set over a rectangular base (inscribed *Iaw* on the gem), and that it is accompanied by much the same assortment of complementary magical characters or “ring signs.”⁶⁶ Two of the three characters on the ring—the stars and the “Z”—are matched on the back of the gem, while the third—the *pentalpha*—accompanies the Chnoubis in the medallions of our two illustrated armbands.⁶⁷ Notice that the “Z” also appears with the Chnoubis on the Fouquet armband (fig. 8); significantly, this specific character is known to have had a long and close association with Chnoubis (i.e. abdominal) amulets.⁶⁸ In fact, it is this character that Alexander of Tralles instructs be placed “on the head” (bezel?) of medico-amuletic rings used to treat colic—rings which, like this one, were to have eight-sided hoops.⁶⁹ Thus it seems that in both iconography and function this ring may legitimately be charac-

in the Greco-Roman Period, Bollingen Series, 37 (New York, 1953), II, 263 f., fig. 1137.

⁶⁵One “ray,” detached and at the bottom of the bezel, may well be an echo of the creature’s lost serpent’s tail. The rays on the Paris gem terminate in the letters for the semitic formula *semes eilam*, “eternal sun” (*ibid.*, 263).

⁶⁶This “base” may well have developed from the *cista* which sometimes appears below the Chnoubis (cf. Delatte and Derchain, *Intailles magiques*, nos. 70, 79). On magical characters or “ring signs” (so-called because they often terminate in tiny rings), see Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 58 f., 194 f.; Delatte and Derchain, *Intailles magiques*, 360; and A. A. Barb, “*Diva matrix*,” *JWarb*, 16 (1953), note 48. Such symbols appear frequently on Greco-Egyptian medico-magical gems.

⁶⁷These armbands and the stamp illustrated in our figure 4 suggest that the *pentalpha* may have been a specifically “medical” character. Among the Pythagoricians it was recognized as the symbol of health and was, in fact, named *hygieia*. See P. Perdrizet, *Negotium perambulans in tenebris*, Publication de la Faculté des Lettres de l’Université de Strasbourg, 6 (Strasbourg, 1922), 35 ff.

⁶⁸See Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 59. The bottom character on the reverse of the gem in figure 14 is also distinctive to Chnoubis amulets.

⁶⁹Alexander of Tralles VIII, 2 (= *On Colic*): Grk. text, ed. Puschmann, *Alexander*, II, 377; Fr. trans., Brunet, IV, 81:

Take an iron ring and make its hoop eight-sided, and write thus on the octagon: “Flee, flee, O bile, the lark is pursuing you.” Then engrave the following character on the head of the ring: N. I have used this method many times, and I thought it inappropriate not to draw your attention to it, since it has a power against the illness. But I urge you not to communicate it to people you happen to meet, but to reserve it to those who are virtuous and capable of guarding it.

The “Z” (or “N”) symbol Alexander recommends has qualities of that of the Fouquet armband (fig. 8) and that of the Menil ring (fig. 13): the terminations of the bars are marked by small rings, and two more tiny rings appear to each side of the transverse stroke. No ring with precisely the above characteristics is known to have survived, which is hardly surprising considering the metal that Alexander stipulates. However, the Menil Foundation Collection does include an octagonal iron ring (no. II.B23)

⁶¹F. de Mély and C. E. Ruelle, *Les lapidaires de l’antiquité et du moyen âge, II: Les lapidaires grecs* (Paris, 1896–1902), II, 177 (quoted in Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 55).

⁶²Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, no. 2189; illustrated 1.5:1. See Delatte and Derchain, *Intailles magiques*, no. 80. Another such gem is in the Benaki Museum, Athens (no. 13537).

⁶³Houston, Menil Foundation Collection, II.B24; illustrated 1:1. Said to have come from Asia Minor. Inscription: Psalm 90. Iconography: Chnoubis head with *pentalpha* and ring signs. See G. Vikan and J. Nesbitt, *Security in Byzantium: Locking, Sealing, and Weighing*, Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Collection Publications, 2 (Washington, D.C., 1980), 20. A dating to the seventh or eighth century is indicated by the form of the *beta* (“R” with a bar across the bottom).

⁶⁴Formerly in a private collection, Paris; illustrated ca. 1:1. For the iconography and inscriptions of this intaglio, see Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 59; and E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*

terized as the Byzantine descendant of Greco-Egyptian ancestors like those illustrated in our figures 12 and 14. True, the medium and format have changed, the inscription is now biblical, and the Chnoubis itself has turned into a creature very much like Gorgon—it's tail, once compressed (fig. 8), desiccated (fig. 9), and detached (fig. 13), has been all but forgotten, and its seven "rays," now fully circumscribed by their traditional solar disc, have acquired monster heads. Yet, through all of this, the basic function of this object type remained the same and, even today, the genealogical thread that binds its distinctive imagery over centuries and cultures is unmistakable.⁷⁰

The Menil ring (fig. 13) is one of a group of Byzantine amuletic rings of similar design and decoration, some of which bear inscriptions shedding additional light on their medical use.⁷¹ One silver specimen in the British Museum shows a bezel much like the Menil ring, with a human head and seven monster-headed rays; its octagonal hoop, however, is inscribed with the words, "Lord, help the wearer."⁷² Now significantly, the gerund used for "wearer" bears a feminine case ending, which sug-

gests the possibility that the abdominal distress against which this Chnoubis' powers were invoked was of a specifically womanly sort⁷³—a possibility which is substantially strengthened if not confirmed by yet another silver ring in the group, excavated at Corinth (fig. 15).⁷⁴ Again, the bezel takes the form of a solar disc, at the center of which is the rayed Chnoubis/Gorgon, though this time without the monster terminations. The point of special interest, however, is the inscription on the hoop, which reads, "Womb amulet" ([Hy]sterikon *Phylakterion*). For not only does the uterus fall naturally within the Chnoubis' abdominal domain,⁷⁵ the Chnoubis was one of just a few magical creatures—all "masters of the womb"—who were specifically charged with control over the uterus on Greco-Egyptian gem amulets. The Chnoubis will, for example, often appear atop a bell-shaped representation of the womb, at the lower orifice of which will be the great key by which the organ is "closed" and thereby controlled (fig. 16).⁷⁶

As silver armbands led naturally into this group of rings, so these rings draw us into a much larger, generally much later group of uterine pendant amulets which have long been recognized as medico-amuletic, because the inscriptions that many of them bear address the womb (*Hystera*) directly, as though it were a living creature.⁷⁷ They usually apply to it the double epithet "dark and black one," and often accuse it of "coiling like a serpent, hissing like a dragon, and roaring like a lion"—and then admonish it to "lie down like a lamb."⁷⁸ Most

with a large square bezel bearing the opening words of Psalm 90.

⁷⁰ It is unmistakable, thanks to the silver armbands illustrated in figures 8 and 9, which show clearly the process whereby the rayed Chnoubis head, in its human form, came to dominate and then eliminate the creature's snake tail—even while the distinctive number of rays and associate magical characters remained constant. For the Byzantines, the rayed Chnoubis head thus acquired the character of a Gorgon-like emblem. Indeed, there is evidence that Gorgon and the Chnoubis may fairly early on have been confused with one another: a gem amulet published three decades ago by Campbell Bonner shows on one of its faces a very classical Gorgon head; on its other side a later inscription addresses that creature as "Gorgon" at its beginning and "Chnoubis" at its closing. See C. Bonner, "A Miscellany of Engraved Stones," *Hesperia*, 23:2 (1954), no. 42. The adaptation of the Chnoubis to ring bezels and pendants (cf. our fig. 18), and its seeming identification with (and partial transformation into) Gorgon, was probably facilitated by the fact that Late Antiquity already knew a tradition of Gorgon (Medusa) pendants. Compare, for example, M. Hewig, *A Corpus of Roman Engraved Gemstones from British Sites*, BAR British Series 8, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1978), nos. 750 ff.

⁷¹ The group is characterized by large, thin bezels with flat, usually octagonal hoops, and by Chnoubis heads and magical ring signs; like the armbands, most of these rings are silver. See Dalton, *Early Christian Antiquities*, no. 142; Orsi, *Sicilia bizantina*, fig. 68; and G. R. Davidson, *Corinth, XII: The Minor Objects* (Princeton, 1952), 231, nos. 1947–1953. There are two unpublished members of this group in the Clemens Collection, Cologne (Kunstgewerbemuseum nos. H 937 and G 848). Both are from Sicily, and are close to those published by Orsi. One (G 848) shows a six-rayed Chnoubis head set upon shoulders. I would like to thank B. Chadour for bringing them to my attention.

⁷² Dalton, *Early Christian Antiquities*, no. 142.

⁷³ It is worth noting here that the Spier armband (fig. 10) carries an invocation naming a certain "Anna."

⁷⁴ Davidson, *Corinth*, no. 1947 ("not later than the tenth century"); illustrated 1:1.

⁷⁵ This is true whether considered simply as a potentially troublesome organ, as the process of healthy childbirth (or birth control), or as the generic womanly organ whose "wanderings" might cause any number of physical or emotional problems. See Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 90; and Barb, "Diva matrix," 193 ff. Cf. *PGM*, VII, 260–71.

⁷⁶ Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, no. B1 14; illustrated 1.5:1. See Delatte and Derchain, *Intailles magiques*, no. 345. To the left and right of the Chnoubis are Isis and a dog-headed mummy; enclosing the group is the Ouroboros, the snake with its tail in its mouth.

⁷⁷ For the most recent treatment of the group, and references to most of the extensive earlier bibliography, see V. N. Zaleskaja, "Amulettes byzantines magiques et leur liens avec le littérature apocryphe," *Actes du XIV^e Congrès International des Etudes Byzantines*, Bucharest, 6–12 Septembre, 1971, III (Bucharest, 1976), 243 ff. See also Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 90 f.; and notes 78 and 86 below. Cf. *PGM*, VII, 260–71.

⁷⁸ For the inscriptions, see W. Drexler, "Alte Beschwörungsmeln," *Philologus*, 58 (1899), 594 ff.; and V. Laurent, "Amulettes byzantines et formulaires magiques," *BZ*, 36 (1936), 303 ff.

members of this group carry some such uterine charm and an appropriate invocation addressed to the Virgin, while all show a form of the Gorgon-like head familiar from our group of rings. Only relatively few of these amulets are of the period of the earlier extant rings (i.e., seventh to eighth century), and none appears to be contemporary with the armbands (sixth to seventh century). Among the earliest members of the group is a cast lead specimen in the Hermitage (fig. 17),⁷⁹ whose apotropaic device is remarkably like that of the Corinth ring; around its circumference is a garbled version of the *Trisagion*, while on its back side the uterus is named, and the help of Holy Mary and the Theotokos are invoked against it. On the other hand, a slightly later—perhaps ninth century—silver pendant in the Menil Foundation Collection (fig. 18)⁸⁰ is closer in general design to the Menil ring; moreover on both, the creature's seven rays individually take a form surprisingly close to that of the more traditional lion-snake Chnoubis.⁸¹ The many errors in transcription on this pendant betray the hand of a craftsman basically ignorant of the rich medico-magical tradition that lies behind it. Between the creature's serpentine solar rays are the letters for "Grace of God" (without the initial *chi*) and *Iaw*,⁸² while around its circumference is, again, the *Trisagion* (with *alphas* for *lamdas* and a *kappa* for a *beta*).⁸³ On the pendant's back side is a complete but confused rendition of the *Hystera* charm common to the group: (around the circum-

ference) "Womb, dark [and] black, eat blood [and] drink blood";⁸⁴ (within the field) "As a serpent you coil; as a lion you roar; as a sheep, lie down; as a woman. . . ." Framing the inscription is a series of traditional but again confused magical characters and symbols: above are the *pentalpha*, two crescent moons, a star, an erect snake(?), and a figure—perhaps a misunderstood archangel—holding a long cross staff, while below are a pair of "Z"s and a ring-sign star lacking two of its normal eight points. All of these symbols appear frequently on Late Antique gem amulets and, as we have already seen, the "Z," the star, and the *pentalpha* have strong traditional ties with Chnoubis abdominal amulets—and now through them, with the uterus.⁸⁵ Indeed, that these pendants bear charms which admonish the uterus to "lie down," and here, moreover, to consume blood—presumably the blood that it would otherwise discharge—suggest that they may have functioned specifically to enhance fertility; that is, a tranquil, bloodless womb will avoid miscarriage and favor healthy parturition.⁸⁶

Those for whom our silver armbands were made need not have relied solely on the magic of the

⁷⁹ Leningrad, State Hermitage Museum, *omega* 1159; illustrated 1:1. The suspension loop has broken away. See Zaleskaja, "Amulettes," 244, fig. 3; and for an identical specimen, Laurent, "Amulettes," 308, fig. 2 (who renders and discusses the inscription). Note that the rays again number seven, and that above the head of the creature is a three-pronged fork motif which recalls the central, Chnoubis medallion of the Fouquet armband (fig. 8).

⁸⁰ Houston, Menil Foundation Collection, no. 824; illustrated ca. 1:1. The suspension loop has broken away. Said to have come from Asia Minor. Unpublished. I wish to thank Nicolas Oikonomides and Werner Seibt for help in reading and dating this inscription. A nearly-illegible bronze pendant much like this one is preserved in the Benaki Museum, Athens.

⁸¹ Characteristics, besides the serpentine body, include the rearing head, long snout, open mouth, and projecting tufts of mane behind the head. Compare, in addition to our figures 8, 12 and 16, Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, nos. 81, 82; and Delatte and Derchain, *Intailles Magiques*, no. 62. The device on the Menil pendant is formed as if of a single human-headed Chnoubis which itself sprouts seven lion-snake Chnoubis rays.

⁸² Compare our figure 14. On *Iaw* as an amuletic expression of divine power, see Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 134 f.

⁸³ That a *K* could be substituted for a *B* (in *Sabaoth* of the *Trisagion*) suggests that the form of the *beta* in the craftsman's model was that characteristic of the seventh and eighth centuries (and found on the hoop of the Menil ring), which looks like a Latin "R" with an (easily overlooked) bar across the bottom.

⁸⁴ I take this as an injunction addressed to the uterus. Although references to the consumption of blood have not hitherto been documented among this particular group of pendant uterine charms, they do appear on earlier amulets of similar function. See Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 88, 217 f.; and A. A. Barb, "Bois du sang, Tantale," *Syria*, 19 (1952), 271 ff.

⁸⁵ For the stars, moons, "snake," and "Z," see Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, nos. 75, 108, 163, 222, 280, 339, etc. For the figure with the long staff, see M. C. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, Volume I: Metalwork, Ceramics, Glass, Glyptics, Painting* (Washington, D.C., 1962), no. 117 (one of many of this type).

⁸⁶ Barb ("Bois du sang," 279) offers a similar interpretation for an amulet bearing Tantalus, a representation of the uterus, and the injunction that Tantalus "drink blood." The origin and meaning of the Gorgon-like device that dominates the pendants in this group has intrigued and puzzled scholars for more than a century. (For a brief review of scholarship, see Zaleskaja, "Amulettes," 243 f.; and add to it: Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 90; and Barb, "Diva matrix," 210 f.) That no satisfactory solution was ever offered is due in large measure to the fact that these pendants were never studied within the broader context of Early Byzantine medical amulets, for it is only by way of related rings and armbands that their imagery (and function) may be traced back to Antique Chnoubis gems. Most recently Zaleskaja, taking up Sokolov's arguments of 1889, rightly rejected all prevailing theories with the observation that none accounted for the fact that the creature's serpentine rays usually number seven (on earlier specimens) or twelve (on later examples). Yet, when he chose to disregard Greco-Egyptian gem amulets and instead to explain the "seven" textually, by way of the "seven female spirits" from the *Testament of Solomon* (McCown, *Testament*, 31* ff.) who have control over (e.g.) "deception, strife, jealousy, and error," Zaleskaja failed to account for the pendants' uterine connection, much less for their rich iconographic tradition, and that of their accompanying magical characters.

Chnoubis, for there were two other iconographic “charms”—the holy rider and the Palestinian christological cycle—whose powers converged toward the same end. Indeed, two of the earliest members of our uterine pendant group show a holy rider on their reverse side.⁸⁷ Surely this rider and the Chnoubis on the obverse were thought to act in concert against a common evil, and surely that evil is to be recognized in the bare-breasted female who, beneath the hooves of the horse, is about to be impaled by the rider’s lance (cf. figs. 9, 19, 20).⁸⁸ But who is she? As many scholars have already concluded in discussing the same iconography on other, contemporary amulets, this can only be antiquity’s female archdemon: Lilith among the Jews, Alabasria in Early Byzantine Egypt (and so labelled in the well-known fresco at Bawit), Gyllou to the Byzantines, and Abyzou in the *Testament of Solomon*.⁸⁹ The evil intent of this creature, who went by as many as forty names and took nearly as many shapes, is spelled out in the *Testament of Solomon*:

I am Abyzou [or Obizuth]; and by night I sleep not, but go my rounds over all the world, and visit women in childbirth. And . . . if I am lucky, I strangle the child.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ See Schlumberger, “Amulettes,” 79; and H. Möbius, “Griechisch-orientalische Bleimedaillons aus Ionien,” *AA*, 56 (1941), 26. On the armbands the Chnoubis and the holy rider seem to have been interchangeable as well as complementary. A few of the more elaborate examples in the group (e.g., Froehner, *Collection*, 7) add the apotropaic acclamation *Heis Theos O Nikon Ta Kaka* over the rider; significantly, that same acclamation is coupled instead with the Chnoubis on the Fouquet armband (our fig. 8).

⁸⁸ That the figure beneath the horse is indeed female and bare-breasted is clear on a few of the finer armbands, (e.g., *ibid.*, 7; and O. M. Dalton, “A Gold Pectoral Cross and an Amuletic Bracelet of the Sixth Century,” *Mélanges offerts à M. Gustave Schlumberger* [Paris, 1924], II, pl. XVII, 3).

⁸⁹ See Perdrizet, *Negotium*, 15 ff.; A. A. Barb, “Antaura: The Mermaid and the Devil’s Grandmother,” *JWarb*, 29 (1966), 4 ff.; and C. Detleff and G. Müller, “Von Teufel, Mittagsdämon und Amuletten,” *JbAChr*, 17 (1974), 99 ff. On Early Byzantine amulets this she-devil is frequently coupled with the “much-suffering” Evil Eye—the destructive eye of envy—which was her *modus operandi*. See Perdrizet, *Negotium*, 30; and, for some examples, Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, nos. 298–303. For the Bawit frescoes, see J. Clédat, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouît*, *MémInstCaire*, 12 (Cairo, 1904), pl. LVI. There is an interesting Early Byzantine rock crystal cone seal in the Malcove Collection, University of Toronto, which shows above the holy rider three letters, *gamma*, *iota* (?), and *lamda*, which were probably intended to label “Gilou” (Gyllou), which here takes a very snakelike form. On variant spellings of this demon’s name, see Perdrizet, *Negotium*, 20; and on the Byzantine cone seal as a genre, see Vikan and Nesbitt, *Security*, 20 ff., fig. 46. In the Benaki Museum in Athens is a gold belt(?) clasp of sixth- or seventh-century date with a monogram which may resolve as *Gelou*. See B. Segal, *Museum Benaki, Athens: Katalog der Goldschmiede-Arbeiten* (Athens, 1938), no. 267. Thanks for this reference are due to L. Bouras.

⁹⁰ McCowan, *Testament*, 43* ff.; and F. C. Conybeare, “The Testament of Solomon,” *JQR*, 11 (1899), 30.

Obviously, in attacking this archenemy of parturient women the holy rider was serving one and the same goal as that implicit in the very presence of the Chnoubis/Gorgon (as “master of the womb”) and explicit in uterine charms like “lie down,” and “drink blood”; namely, the goal of healthy, successful childbirth.⁹¹

The holy rider was one of Late Antiquity’s most popular amuletic motifs; indeed, in this statistical sense alone it may be said to have taken over the role once played by the Chnoubis.⁹² One of its most characteristic appearances is on the obverse of a distinctive genre of intaglio haematite amulet; the rider is labelled “Solomon” and the gem’s back side usually bears the words: *Sphragis Theou*, “Seal of God” (figs. 19, 20).⁹³ Although Solomon was not, in fact, a mounted warrior, he was renowned as the most powerful of the Kings of Israel; endowed with exceptional wisdom, he was believed by Jews and Christians alike to wield power over evil spirits. According to the *Testament of Solomon*, which was probably the most popular magic treatise in early Byzantium, King Solomon was able to control and exploit the forces of evil, and thereby build the Temple, only because God had given him a “little

⁹¹ In the *Testament of Solomon* (*loc. cit.*) Abyzou is described as having: a woman’s form, a head without limbs, dishevelled hair tossed wildly, and a body in darkness. This Gorgon-like description, plus the close medico-magical association of Abyzou and the Chnoubis (one the demon and the other the antidote) may well have contributed to the latter’s iconographic transmutation in medieval Byzantium—where, after all, the Greco-Egyptian Chnoubis would have been little understood. Yet, it would be a mistake to identify Abyzou with Gorgon and, in turn, both with the device on our uterine rings and pendants—as A. A. Barb has done (“Antaura,” 9). For then left unexplained would be the recurrent choice of precisely seven “rays,” the solar disc, the associated Chnoubis magical characters, and the close relationship of the pendants and rings to the armbands, where the Chnoubis is unmistakable. Furthermore, it should be recalled that Abyzou (as a bare-breasted female) does appear occasionally on one and the same object with the Gorgon-like uterine device (note 87 above). And finally, Gorgon-Medusa, when it does appear in early Byzantium (e.g., on Athena bust weights) in fact looks nothing like our pendants’ apotropaic device (cf. G.F. Bass, “Underwater Excavations at Yassi Ada: A Byzantine Shipwreck,” *AA*, 77 [1962], 560). Contrast also the earlier Gorgon-head pendants cited in note 70 above.

⁹² See Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 208 ff., nos. 294 ff.; B. Begatti, “Altre medaglie di Salomone cavaliere e loro origine,” *RACr*, 47 (1971), 331 ff.; and J. Russell, “The Evil Eye in Early Byzantine Society,” *XVI. Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress, Akten II/3*, *JÖBG*, 32:3 (1982), 540 ff.

⁹³ Figure 19: Columbia, University of Missouri Museum of Art and Archaeology, Robinson no. 35; illustrated 1:1. See Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, no. 296. Figure 20: Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, no. 26092; illustrated 1:1. See *ibid.*, no. 294. For the genre as a whole, see P. Perdrizet, “*Sphragis Solomonis*,” *REG*, 16 (1903), 49 f.; Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 208 ff., nos. 294 ff.; and Delatte and Derchain, *Intailles magiques*, nos. 369 ff.

seal ring" with which he could "lock up all the demons."⁹⁴ Solomon's identification on the obverse of these amulets with the holy rider—a generic emblem of victory—evokes in a graphic but symbolic way his victory over demons, while the inscription on the reverse simply identifies the vehicle of that victory, the "Seal of God."

From the beginning, Solomon's supernatural powers were thought to have a specifically medical dimension.⁹⁵ According to Josephus:

God granted him knowledge of the art used against demons for the benefit and healing of men. He also composed incantations by which illnesses are relieved, and left behind forms of exorcisms with which those possessed by demons drive them out, never to return.⁹⁶

Similarly, the *Testament of Solomon* includes a number of purely medical encounters between this Old Testament king and sickness-inducing spirits, each of whom Solomon forces—with God's seal ring—to reveal his name and the magical influence to which his powers are subject. Solomon's interrogation of the "Thirty-Six Elements of the Cosmic Ruler of Darkness," for example, provides a veritable litany of human afflictions and of supernatural antidotes:

And the ninth [Element] said: "I am called Kurtael. I send colics in the bowels. I induce pains. If I hear the words, Iaoth, imprison Kurtael, I at once retreat." And the tenth said: "I am called Metathiax. I cause the reins to ache. If I hear the words, Adonael, imprison Metathiax, I at once retreat." And the eleventh said. . . .⁹⁷

Against this background it is hardly surprising to discover that at least some Solomonic amulets were intended to be specifically medicinal from their point of manufacture. For example, a bronze amuletic ring from Early Byzantine Egypt bears around the circumference of its bezel the words, "Solomon, guard [i.e., preserve] health," while at its center is an anchor-cross with fish, one of the most frequently-employed devices on Early Christian signet rings (fig. 21).⁹⁸ In both design and effect

this ring shares much in common with the Chnoubis gem amulet illustrated in our figure 12, on the back side of which are the words: "[Chnoubis], guard in health the stomach of Proclus."⁹⁹

Returning now to the holy rider/Abyzou, and specifically to our group of haematite amulets, several points are worthy of note. First, some of these amulets bear magic characters beneath the inscription on their back side, and the one that appears most frequently—the "barred-triple-S" (fig. 19)—was, even more than the "Z," specifically associated with the Chnoubis (cf. fig. 14).¹⁰⁰ Second, at least a few specimens within this series of intaglios show, instead of the "barred-triple-S," what is unmistakably a key beneath the inscription on their back side (fig. 20). And while it is certainly true that the key was, in early Byzantium (and especially in the *Testament of Solomon*), functionally equivalent to, and interchangeable with, the seal,¹⁰¹ it is also true that the key had its own special meaning within the tradition of Antique gem amulets: it was the "key to the womb" (note again our figure 16).¹⁰² This brings us to the third and most interesting point: the vast majority of surviving Greco-Egyptian "clé de matrice" amulets are of the same size, shape, and material as our group of Solomon amulets—which suggests, of course, that they were part of the same

abbreviated. The beginning of the inscription is marked by what appears to be a simple cross. For another Solomon amulet with similar inscription, see Perdrizet, "*Sphragis*," 46; and for this verb on amulets, see Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 179 f. A "neutral" subject already popular among pagans, the anchor-with-fish motif was one of the most readily accepted devices for Early Christian signets. Specifically sanctioned by Clement of Alexandria (*Paed.* 3.11), the anchor evoked the cross and the hope of the faithful for salvation (Hebrews, 6.19). The fish, on the other hand, may have been intended to evoke the *ICHTHYS* acrostic for Christ, the souls of the faithful, or it may have been nothing more than a compositional carryover from pagan prototypes.

⁹⁹ Another Solomonic *phylakterion*, though of a less permanent sort, is described to Pseudo-Pliny (3.15: *ad quartanas*): ". . . in charta virgine scribis quod in dextro brachio ligatum portet ille qui patitur: recede ab illo Gaio Seio, tertiana, Solomon te sequitur." V. Rose, ed., *Plinii secundi quae fertur una cum Gargilii Martialis Medicina* (Leipzig, 1875), 89 = A. Önnersfors, ed., *Plinii secundi iunioris: De medicina* (Berlin, 1964 [CML III]), III, 15.7–8 (p. 78). Similarly, a papyrus amulet of the fifth or sixth century (PO, 18, 415 ff.) bears the Lord's Prayer followed by "the exorcism of Solomon against all impure spirits"; it concludes with these words: "guard those who carry this amulet from fever, from all sorts of maladies, and bad wounds. Thus be it."

¹⁰⁰ Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 58 f., nos. 296, 297; Delatte and Derchain, *Intailles magiques*, 56 f., nos. 371, 376.

¹⁰¹ Thus Solomon was able to "lock up all the demons." See G. Vikan, "Security in Byzantium: Keys," *XVI. Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress, Akten II/3, JÖBG*, 32:3 (1982), 503 ff. (esp. 506).

¹⁰² Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 85 ff.; and Delatte and Derchain, *Intailles magiques*, 245 ff.

⁹⁴ It was this ring which, according to some variants of the text, bore the *pentalfa* as its device. See McCown, *Testament*, 10*. For the composition, text tradition, and scholarship of the *Testament of Solomon*, see A.-M. Denis, *Introduction aux pseudépigraphes grecs d'Ancien Testament* (Leiden, 1970), 67.

⁹⁵ Perdrizet, "*Sphragis*," 44 ff.

⁹⁶ *Jewish Antiquities* 8.45 (Loeb, V [Cambridge, Mass./London, 1935]).

⁹⁷ McCown, *Testament*, 53*; and Conybeare, "Testament," 35.

⁹⁸ Illustrated ca. 1:1. This ring, which should probably be dated from the fourth to the sixth century, was kindly brought to my attention by its owner, who lives in California. Although "Solomon" is spelled out in full, *Hy[ieia]* and *Phyla[xon?]* are much

medico-magical tradition and fulfilled basically the same function.¹⁰³ And it seems likely that the most important “constant” in that tradition was neither format nor iconography, but rather the material itself: haematite (“bloodstone”).¹⁰⁴ For among the many virtues attributed to haematite over the centuries in treatises on stone, the most important was its ability to stop the flow of blood.¹⁰⁵ And naturally, with this styptic function we are drawn back again to those uterine charms which adjure the consumption of blood and the calming of the womb, and to the impaled Abyzou (with her designs on infants), and to the Chnoubis (as “master of the womb”), and, finally, to that lonely key in figure 20, whose magical function was surely that of closing and controlling the womb.¹⁰⁶

Complementing the Chnoubis and holy rider medallions on the more elaborate of our armbands is a third iconographic “charm”: the Palestinian

christological cycle (figs. 8–10).¹⁰⁷ And it seems likely that this charm, too, was thought to convey a measure of supernatural healing power. After all, on the pilgrim ampullae (fig. 11) it was coupled with *eulogia* oil of the sort often used, like blessed earth, to perform miraculous cures; this, for example, was the practice at the shrine of St. Menas, near Alexandria:

The pilgrim suspended a lamp before the grave [of St. Menas]. . . . It burned day and night, and was filled with fragrant oil. And when anyone took oil of this lamp . . . and rubbed a sick person with it, the sick person was healed of the evil of which he suffered.¹⁰⁸

Moreover, there have recently appeared two hoards comprising more than ninety tiny image-bearing clay tokens (figs. 22–24) which in design and fabric are much like small Symeon tokens, but which iconographically match up instead with the ampullae and armbands.¹⁰⁹ Some bear scenes like the

¹⁰³ Barb (“Bois du sang,” 279) was the first to note this; it had escaped the notice of both Bonner and Delatte.

¹⁰⁴ Haematite is a black iron ore which, when powdered or rubbed against a rough surface, becomes red (cf. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 36.147). In the case of the armbands, rings, and pendants, the genealogical thread leading back to Greco-Egyptian gems was iconographic; medium and format had changed radically. Here, on the other hand, medium and format were maintained while the main (though not the secondary) iconographic motifs were changed radically.

¹⁰⁵ See Barb, “Bois du sang,” 279.

¹⁰⁶ Both Perdrizet (“*Sphragis*,” 50) and Barb (“Bois du sang,” 279) recognized the power for “blood control” in haematite amulets. Moreover, Perdrizet drew this conclusion specifically in relation to these Solomon haematites—though, unaware of their links to earlier uterine amulets, he did not see their significance for the womb and for procreation.

That the demon Gyllou, Solomon, and childbirth were closely linked in the Byzantine mind (at least in later centuries), is indicated by a passage in Michael Psellus (K. Sathas, *Bibliotheca graeca mediæ aevi*, V [Paris, 1876], 572 f.) wherein the latter two are introduced in his short discussion of the former. Late antiquity knew another, specifically Christian blood-control (by implication, “birth”) amulet: the healing of the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5.25 ff.). A rock crystal pendant with that iconography is preserved in the J. Spier Collection, N.Y.C., while one in green jasper is in the Benaki Museum, Athens (no. 13527; with a Crucifixion on its back side). Both are likely of east Mediterranean origin and of sixth- to seventh-century date; a later specimen in haematite is in the Metropolitan Museum (*Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*, ed. K. Weitzmann, Exhibition: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York [1977–1978; published 1979], no. 398). Pliny notes that “the people of the East” wear green jaspers as amulets (*Nat. Hist.* 36.118); Dioscorides, on the other hand, notes that jaspers in general are effective as amulets for childbirth (*De mat. medica* 5.142). In a well-known passage from his *Church History* (7.16.2) Eusebius describes at Paneas the following sculptural ensemble, which was taken in his day to represent (i.e., commemorate) the miracle of the woman with the issue of blood (*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd series, I [Grand Rapids, Mich., 1952], 304):

For there stands upon an elevated stone, by the gates of her house, a brazen image of a woman kneeling, with her hands stretched out, as if she were praying. Opposite this is another upright image of a man, made of the same material, clothed decently in a double cloak, and extending his hand toward the woman. At his feet, beside the statue itself, is a certain strange plant, which climbs up to the hem of the brazen cloak, and is a remedy for all kinds of diseases.

¹⁰⁷ See Kitzinger, “Christian Imagery,” 151 f. Contrary to Kitzinger, this “cycle” need not have been complete to convey its magic; only a few scenes (our figures 10 and 27) or just one (Wulff, *Altchristliche Bildwerke*, no. 885) might be excerpted and applied to an amulet.

¹⁰⁸ Kötting, *Peregrinatio*, 198. In fact, both the inscriptional and the iconographic evidence provided by the Monza-Bobbio group of ampullae suggests that they were used as travel amulets—though not necessarily to the exclusion of other magical functions. See Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage*, 24. Cyril of Skythopolis writes that St. Saba used oil of the True Cross—which, according to their inscriptions, the Monza-Bobbio ampullae contained—to exorcise evil spirits, at least some of which must have been sickness-inducing (*Vit. Saba* 26).

¹⁰⁹ One hoard, perhaps of Syrian origin, was acquired by the British Museum in 1973 (acc. nos. 1973.5–1, 1–80); it consists of seventy-nine specimens (plus one Symeon token), and has been published by Richard Camber (“A Hoard,” *passim*). The second hoard, as yet unpublished, was purchased in 1980 through H. Drouot by Professor Robert-Henri Bautier, Paris; it consists of fourteen specimens, including our figures 22–24 (slightly enlarged). I would like to thank Professor Bautier for a set of photographs of his tokens, and for permission to published them. Together, these two hoards form a homogeneous group of ninety-three clay tokens measuring between .5 and 1.5 cm. in diameter (making them roughly half the size of most Symeon tokens). A preliminary survey indicates that these ninety-three specimens derive from just twenty-two molds representing twelve iconographic themes:

*1. Adoration of the Magi	21 specimens (3 molds)
2. “Solomon” (fig. 24)	16 specimens (2 molds)
*3. Baptism	11 specimens (2 molds)
*4. Bust of Christ	9 specimens (1 mold)
*5. Nativity	7 specimens (3 molds)

Women at the Tomb (fig. 22), which depend on a specific *locus sanctus*,¹¹⁰ while others show the Entry into Jerusalem (fig. 23) which, though biblical, is substantially amuletic;¹¹¹ and finally, there are a number of purely magical tokens which bear the name "Solomon" (backwards) and show what appears to be (at least on the better-preserved specimens) a coiled serpent (fig. 24).¹¹² That these tokens functioned as medicine—deriving their

*6. Women at the Tomb (fig. 22)	6 specimens (2 molds)
*7. Annunciation	5 specimens (3 molds)
8. Transfiguration (?)	5 specimens (1 mold)
*9. Entry into Jerusalem (fig. 23)	5 specimens (1 mold)
*10. Adoration of the Cross	5 specimens (2 molds)
11. Tempest Calmed	2 specimens (1 mold)
12. Miracle of Cana	1 specimen (1 mold)

*Indicates those themes paralleled on the ampullae or the armbands.

The genre represented by these two hoards was not unknown. Indeed, nearly two dozen iconographically related clay tokens have been published from various museum collections; some may actually derive from the matrices attested within our two hoards, though most specimens tend to be larger. See Dalton, *Early Christian Antiquities*, nos. 966–68; Wulff, *Altchristliche Bildwerke*, no. 1149 (limestone?); Tchalenko, *Villages antiques*, III (1958), 62, figs. 27, 28; Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Itinéraires archéologiques*, 159 ff., nos. 20–26 (27–31?); H. Buschhausen, *Die spät-römischen Metallschrimia und frühchristlichen Reliquiare*, I. Teil: *Katalog*, *Wiener Byzantinistische Studien*, IX (Vienna, 1971), no. C10; L. Y. Rahmani, "The Adoration of the Magi on Two Sixth-Century C.E. Eulogia Tokens," *IEJ*, 29 (1979), 34 ff., pl. 8, B-D; *idem*, "A Representation of the Baptism on an Eulogia Token," *Atiqot: English Series*, 14 (1980), 109 ff.; and Camber, "A Hoard," notes 6 and 9. Just one additional iconographic theme, the frontally-seated Virgin and Child, is attested in this series (Lafontaine-Dosogne); as in our two hoards, the Adoration of the Magi is by far the most frequently attested subject (see also note 116 below).

¹¹⁰ Compare our figures 10 and 11. Here, the two Marys have been deleted for lack of space. Note again the "grill" of the pilgrim accounts (see note 55 above).

¹¹¹ Compare our figure 10. For this scene of "Christ as Holy Rider," see note 57 above. Here, the animal is clearly identifiable as a donkey. And here, as in several other holy rider compositions of the period (e.g., Dalton, *Early Christian Antiquities*, no. 543; and Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, no. 324), the *propemptos* (escort) of traditional *adventus* iconography appears—even though he is not called for by the Gospel account of the Entry into Jerusalem. See K. G. Holum and G. Vikan, "The Trier Ivory, *Adventus* Ceremonial, and the Relics of St. Stephen," *DOP*, 33 (1979), 118 f.

¹¹² This reading of these Solomon tokens is corroborated by a bronze amulet from Early Byzantine Egypt published by Wulff (*Altchristliche Bildwerke*, no. 825). Its obverse shows the Entry into Jerusalem, while its reverse bears the words *Sphragis Solomons*, a standing figure (Solomon?), a small cross in a nimbus, and a coiled serpent-like monster. This same form appears between personifications of the sun and moon on a group of closely-interrelated bronze amulets, all but one of which bear an inscription invoking the *Sphragis Solomons*. They are apparently Syro-Palestinian in origin and of sixth- to seventh-century date. See Schlumberger, "Amulettes," nos. 2 and 3; and *Byzantine Art*

curative powers from their "blessed" earth and amuletic imagery¹¹³—is suggested by their inherently "consumable" nature, by their inclusion of Solomon,¹¹⁴ and by their obvious similarity to medicinal Symeon tokens (cf. figs. 2, 3); indeed, the larger of the two hoards included a Symeon token.¹¹⁵ And just as a Symeon pendant (fig. 7) was capable of conveying that saint's healing power, independent of blessed substance, so also these scenes

in the Collection of the U.S.S.R. (in Russian), Exhibition: The Hermitage, Leningrad; The Pushkin Museum, Moscow (1975–1977), no. 62 (with earlier bibliography, wherein Zalasskaja suggests that the form is Golgotha). An excellent representative of the type is preserved in the Benaki Museum, Athens. For yet another, slightly different rendition of the same creature (with the inscription "Christ, help") see G. Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord*, III (Paris, 1958), 62, fig. 29.

¹¹³ The homogeneity of the tokens within this series, plus the fact that some of them (e.g., those with "Solomon") are topographically "anonymous," suggest that they came from a single blessed source and not from so many *loca sancta*. Indeed, there can be no doubt that christological tokens of this sort were being produced from the *eulogia* clay of the Miraculous Mountain: there is the evidence of the two-faced stamp reproduced in our figure 5, and the fact that many non-Symeon clay tokens (among those cited in the second part of note 109 above) have been discovered in the region of Antioch (Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Itinéraires archéologiques*, nos. 20–26; and Tchalenko, *Villages antiques*, III [1958], 62, figs. 27, 28). Several specimens in the Antioch Museum show a frontal Virgin and Child much like that on the reverse of the stamp (cf. fig. 5 and Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Itinéraires archéologiques*, pl. XLVI, no. 20). The possibility that a single blessed hill could be the source of a variety of iconographically heterogeneous tokens obviously runs counter to prevailing art-historical opinion, which would trace each *eulogia* scene back to its own *locus sanctus* and, in specific, to a mural at that shrine (cf. Rahmani, "The Adoration," 35 f.).

¹¹⁴ The snake may be symbolic of evil (e.g., of the uterus, which "coils like a serpent") or, more likely, of good (e.g., the Chnoubis snake or the snake of Asklepios and Hygieia [cf. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, nos. 84, 84a, 85]). In the latter case especially, a medicinal function is strongly suggested. Three snakes and the word *Hygieia* appear on the medico-amuletic *tabella ansata* in the British Museum cited in note 59 above.

¹¹⁵ Camber, "A Hoard," fig. 15. One wonders how these two hoards—which may originally have been one—came to be formed. That so many tokens so much alike should have come from a pilgrim's purse seems unlikely. Perhaps instead they were found in the remains of a storeroom or workshop at some holy site (see note 43 above), or perhaps they represent the contents of a doctor's or churchman's medicine box. They look very much like the dozens of clay/resin pellets preserved in (what certainly must be) a Late Roman medicine box found by Petrie in Egypt (*Objects*, pl. XXXIII, 3). Moreover, we know that churchmen could be doctors (cf. Magoulis, "Lives of Saints," 128), and that doctors were not above putting "blessed" ingredients in their remedies (cf. F. Cabrol, "Amulettes," *DACL*, II, 2 [Paris, 1907], 1855). If a medicine box like that preserved in the Vatican (Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, no. 138) can bear a Christ miracle scene on its cover, why should not the pills inside be impressed with comparable imagery? It is worth noting here that a clay token with the Adoration of the Magi was discovered in a reliquary in the Chur Cathedral along with an (earlier) ivory medicine box (Buschhausen, *Metallschrimia*, no. C10).

must have had that ability when transferred from their *eulogia* clay (figs. 22, 23) to a silver armband (fig. 10)—or vice versa.¹¹⁶

The Palestinian christological cycle shared by the ampullae and armbands appears in its more or less complete form once again during this period, on a series of well-known octagonal gold rings in Baltimore, London (fig. 25), Palermo, and Washington, D.C.¹¹⁷ These rings are clearly amuletic, and seem to have been designed to exercise their magical powers specifically for married couples. This is suggested by the fact that three of four show husband and wife on their bezel, and by the somewhat unusual quote from Psalm 5.12 which appears on the Palermo ring, "Thou hast crowned us with a shield of favor."¹¹⁸ To judge from the three rele-

vant bezel compositions, the "us" should be understood as the bridal couple, and the "crowning"—at once metaphorical and literal—as that which takes place as part of the marriage ceremony (over which, in this case, Christ and the Virgin preside).¹¹⁹ But what is the nature of the "shield"—the amuletic protection or benefit—with which the wedding couple should thereby be provided? Assumedly, it is a protection that applies to them collectively, as does *Omonia* ("[Marital] Harmony"), which is inscribed below the couple on the bezel of the British Museum ring (fig. 25).¹²⁰ But if the arguments put forward in this paper are correct, the octagonal shape of the hoop and the Palestinian christological cycle incised on it would seem to imply (if not require) that the benefit to the couple be somehow medical—if not more specifically abdominal or even uterine. And indeed, to judge from the inscription on the Dumbarton Oaks marriage belt (fig. 26; detail), "Health" was a benefit which, along with "Harmony" and "Grace," the bridal couple might legitimately invoke "from God" on their wedding day.¹²¹ And how else can marital health be understood than in terms of healthy and successful procreation?¹²²

¹¹⁶ Here must be added a caveat which applies to all the "medicinal" amulets and *eulogiai* discussed in this paper. Although their primary purpose seems to have been the inducement of supernatural healing, they were almost certainly not confined to that single function. Consider, for example, these two hoards of "medicinal" tokens: the pair of tokens which show the Tempest Calmed clearly betray concerns of the seafaring pilgrim (cf. Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage*, 24), while the one specimen with the Miracle of Cana probably had something to do with the consumption or preservation of wine (cf. other such wine amulets in *Papyrus Erzherzog Rainer: Führer durch die Ausstellung* [Vienna, 1894], 124 f.; and note 29 above). It should also be recalled that among the many *eulogia*-induced cures narrated in the *Vita* of Symeon the Younger, there is one miracle (chap. 235) wherein Symeon's dust is used to calm a storm at sea, and one (chap. 230) wherein it is used to restore spoiled wine.

Individual scenes very much like those appearing on these clay tokens were used, often in the form of press-gold medallions, on amuletic fibulae and pendants. See E. B. Smith, "A Lost Encolpium and Some Notes on Early Christian Iconography," *BZ*, 23 (1920), 217 ff.; W. F. Volbach, "Zwei frühchristliche Gold medaillons," *Berliner Museen*, 34 (1922), 80 ff.; *idem*, "Un medaglione d'oro con l'immagine di S. Teodoro nel Museo di Reggio Calabria," *ASCal*, 13 (1943–1944), 65 ff.; J. H. Iliffe, "A Byzantine Gold Enkolpion from Palestine (About Sixth Century A.D.)," *QDAP*, 14 (1950), 97 ff.; Ross, *Catalogue* (1962), no. 86; *idem*, *Catalogue* (1965), no. 37; and J. Engel, "Une decouverte enigmatique: La fibule chretienne d'Attalens," *Dossiers histoire et archéologie*, 62 (1982), 88 ff. The famous Strzygowski gold medallion at Dumbarton Oaks (Ross, *Catalogue* [1965], no. 36) is basically a deluxe pendant amulet bearing three typical scenes from the Palestinian christological cycle.

¹¹⁷ London, British Museum; illustrated ca. 1.25:1. See Dalton, *Early Christian Antiquities*, no. 129. Iconography: Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, Baptism, Adoration of the Magi (out of order), Crucifixion, Women at the Tomb. For the other three rings, see P. Verdier, "An Early Christian Ring with a Cycle of the Life of Christ," *The Bulletin of the Walters Art Gallery*, 11:3 (1958); C. Cecchelli, "L'anello bizantino del Museo di Palermo," *Miscellanea Guillaume de Jerphanion*, OCP, 13 (1947), 40 ff.; and Ross, *Catalogue* (1965), no. 69. For the group, see Engemann, "Palästinische Pilgerampullen," 20 f.; *Age of Spirituality* no. 446 (G. Vikan); and Kitzinger, "Christian Imagery," 151.

¹¹⁸ For another Byzantine marriage ring with this inscription, see A. Banck, *Byzantine Art in the Collections of the USSR* (Leningrad/Moscow, n.d.), no. 106c.

¹¹⁹ Some Byzantine rings of the period show crowns hovering over the heads of the bride and groom (e.g., Ross, *Catalogue* [1965], no. 67); on this bezel and on that of the Dumbarton Oaks ring, Christ and the Virgin appear to be putting the crowns in place. See P. A. Drossoyianni, "A Pair of Byzantine Crowns," *XVI. Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress, Akten II/3, JÖBG*, 32:3 (1982), 531 f.

¹²⁰ This word appears on many Early Byzantine marriage rings. See Ross, *Catalogue* (1965), nos. 67 and 69; and *Age of Spirituality*, no. 263.

¹²¹ Acc. no. 37.33; illustrated 1:1. See Ross, *Catalogue* (1965), no. 38. "Health" is also invoked on the de Clercq gold marriage belt (A. de Ridder, *Collection de Clercq, catalogue: VII, les bijoux et les pierres gravées, 1, les bijoux* [Paris, 1911], no. 1212), and on at least a few bronze marriage rings of the period, including one in the Cabinet des Médailles (Seyrig Coll.), and one in the Menil Foundation Collection (II.B26).

¹²² For the Byzantine marriage ceremony, see P. N. Trempela, "Hē akolouthia tōn mnēstrōn kai tou gamou," *Theologia*, 18 (1940), 101 ff. (based on manuscripts dating from the mid- to post-Byzantine period). In addition to "Harmony" and "Grace," there are repeated references to childbearing in the form of a formula based on biblical "models": (e.g.) "Bless us, O Lord our God, as you blessed Zacharias and Elisabeth" (*ibid.*, 149). One is reminded of the inscribed censers from Sicily of the sort illustrated in our figure 6 (cf. note 38 above), which bear the phrase, "Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard. . . ." Perhaps the prayers this censor was intended to accompany were those specifically directed toward conception—as were those of Zacharias. It is noteworthy that Symeon the Younger's mother, Martha, went to the Church of St. John the Baptist in Antioch to pray for the conception of a child; after successful incubation, she awoke with a ball of incense in her hand, with which she censured the entire church (*Vita*, chaps. 2 and 3).

That the function of these marriage rings was not merely amuletic, but more specifically medicinal, is corroborated by a closely-related gold and niello “reliquary” locket in the British Museum (fig. 27).¹²³ Not only are medium and technique the same, this locket, like the rings, is octagonal in outline, and it bears on its obverse two scenes from the Palestinian christological cycle: the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi. The locket’s back side shows a cross-on-steps whose arms terminate in what are probably the letters of a magical number, name or phrase;¹²⁴ around its circumference are the words: “Secure deliverance and aversion [from] all evil,” while into the edge of its octagon is inscribed: “of Sts. Cosmas and Damian.” That these famous holy doctors are named leaves little doubt that this was a medical amulet—that the “evil” from which its wearer should be “delivered” was first and foremost that of ill health. And of course, the power for that deliverance came from the locket’s very shape, from its imagery, and from its words, but more than any of these, it must have come from that sanctified bit of material “of Sts. Cosmas and Damian” that this capsule once contained. Most scholars have assumed that this was a tiny relic but, by analogy with the Monza-Bobbio ampullae, it could as well have been a *eulogia*.¹²⁵ And indeed, to judge from the *miracula* of these saints, that would seem to be the more likely conclusion: miracle 30, for example, describes the (customary) distribution of blessed wax in the church-shrine during the all-night Saturday vigil, while miracle 13 evokes the practice, already familiar from Symeon’s *Vita*, of taking *eulogiai* to be employed in the event of illness away from the shrine.¹²⁶ In that instance, the holy medicine—which was ultimately melted and applied to the body—was carried “under the armpit,” but it could just as well have been transported in a locket. This would require, of course, that the

locket be easily opened (as this one can be), and would imply that its contents might be periodically consumed and replenished. But if such were true of this gold and niello locket, the net effect would be to make of it much less a “reliquary” than an “amuletic pill box.”¹²⁷

Cosmas and Damian, and the problem of how one might ensure one’s health while away from their shrine, draw us toward one final genre of Early Byzantine medical artifact: the invocational votive. In our figure 1 is reproduced a tiny silver plaque with a pair of eyes and the words, “In fulfillment of a vow.” This object might legitimately be labelled an “acknowledgment votive,” since it was almost certainly designed and dedicated to acknowledge a healing received. But if so, it would seem to presuppose a *proactive* counterpart; that is, a votive designed and dedicated to invoke future healing. Yet, as logical as this seems, and as abundant as surviving Early Byzantine votives are,¹²⁸ those among them that are demonstrably “medical” in this invocational sense are extremely rare.

One such object, a richly-incised bronze cross supported by a hand, was recently acquired by the Metropolitan Museum (fig. 28).¹²⁹ Likely of sixth- to seventh-century date and east Mediterranean manufacture, it shows on its four arms: the Virgin and Child enthroned (top), Sts. Peter and Paul (right and left, inscribed), and Sts. Cosmas and Damian (bottom), while at its center appears St. Stephen (inscribed), with a censer in one hand and an incense box in the other.¹³⁰ There are, in addition, two invocations: that in large letters on the horizontal cross arm, “Christ, help [me],” is at once

¹²³ London, British Museum; illustrated ca. 1:1. See Dalton, *Early Christian Antiquities*, no. 284. Acquired in Constantinople. See M. Rosenberg, *Geschichte der Goldschmiedekunst auf technischer Grundlage: Niello, bis zum Jahre 1000 nach Chr.* (Frankfurt am Main, 1924), 51; and M. Hadzidakis (Chatzidakis), “Un anneau Byzantin du Musée Benaki,” *BNJbb*, 17 (1939–1943), 178 ff. (for its correct dating, along with the rings, to the seventh century).

¹²⁴ For the argument that these letters provide a date, see Hadzidakis, “Un anneau,” 178 ff. The Cologne ring (G 848) cited in note 71 above, and the Benaki bronze pendant cited in note 112 show the same “number.”

¹²⁵ To judge from its inscriptions, the well-known Demetrius locket at Dumbarton Oaks held both a relic (of blood) and a *eulogia* (of myron). See Ross, *Catalogue* (1965), no. 160.

¹²⁶ See Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*; and Kitzinger, “The Cult of Images,” note 89.

¹²⁷ Rosenberg (*Geschichte der Goldschmiedekunst*, 51) had, without reference to the *miracula*, come to much the same conclusion. The Malcove Collection at the University of Toronto preserves a very unusual—and as yet unpublished—belt or harness fitting which, like this pendant locket, may have functioned as an “amuletic pill box.” In place of the belt plate is a small rectangular box with a sliding lid bearing a large cross. The three sides of the box are inscribed with the same phrase as that appearing on the Yale doctor’s case cited in note 1 above. Functioning as a belt, this box would perhaps have been found over that part of the body where its powers were thought most effective (cf. Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 54). It is bronze and likely dates to the later sixth or seventh century. That its lid can be easily slid open suggests that a consumable *eulogia* and not a relic was preserved inside. This box is like a miniature version of those in wood which were used to hold medicine (cf. note 1 above).

¹²⁸ For those in the pilgrim trade, see Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage*, 44 ff.

¹²⁹ The Cloisters Collection, 1974; 1974.150; reduced. See *Age of Spirituality*, no. 557 (M. Frazer). This votive is now attached to a chandelier, to which it does not belong.

¹³⁰ On this as an incense box, see J. Duffy and G. Vikan, “A Small Box in John Moschus,” *GRBS*, 24:1 (1983), 97 f.

common and generic, while that on the lower arm, "Sts. Cosmas and Damian, grant [me] your blessing,"¹³¹ is both less common, and more specific in its request. For what else can the "blessing" of these holy doctors be than the blessing of good health? And indeed, that this object was created with precisely that goal in mind is substantially confirmed by two peculiarities, one in its design and the other in its decoration. First, like only a few other Early Byzantine crosses, this one is supported by a hand, a striking conception which has been shown to derive from apotropaic votive hands of Jupiter Helopolitanus and of Sabazios.¹³² And second, St. Stephen is interjected in a position of prominence among an otherwise predictable pantheon of saints for the simple reason that he, like Zacharias, was traditionally associated with incense—and we have already seen how essential censuring was to the ritual invocation of supernatural healing.¹³³

CONCLUSIONS

A votive cross (fig. 28) and votive eyes (fig. 1) bracket this survey of "Art, Medicine, and Magic in Early Byzantium" both literally and conceptually; one invoked supernatural healing and one acknowledged it, and everything illustrated and discussed in between—*eulogiai* and amulets—palpably induced it. These are the objects which could satisfy our criterion of being, at one and the same

time, "art" (albeit usually of a plebeian sort) and "medicine" (albeit always of an unscientific sort). As a group they evoke a world of supernatural medicine as pervasive as it was multifaceted: they span the Mediterranean, from Sicily through Greece and Asia Minor to Syria-Palestine and Egypt; they span society, from anonymous lead and bronze through silver to personalized gold.¹³⁴ And although fewer than two dozen pieces were illustrated, they can be taken to speak for a significant portion of early Byzantium's "minor arts," since many were items of mass production (from stamps or molds), while those that were not (e.g., the arm-bands, rings, and intaglios) represent extensive, substantially undifferentiated series. The significant point is that behind most of our illustrations stands a large, often well-known object type or genre. Moreover, those "object types" constitute, *in toto*, an affectively complete medicine chest, whose remedies were as varied in their mode of application as they were in their medical applicability: there are clays to be powdered and drunk or, as paste, rubbed on the body—and oils and waxes to be used in the same way; there are amuletic lockets and ampullae in which to carry these pills and potions, stamps with which to make them, and censers to swing while they're being used; there are large medico-magical silver bands for the arm, smaller ones for the finger, and single silver discs to be hung around the neck—or, for those of lesser means, bronze and lead equivalents; there are styptic gemstones for the purse and "health" jewelry for newlyweds; and there are, finally, votives to ask for the preservation of health, and votives to give thanks when lost health has been restored.

Harnessed in our hypothetical Early Byzantine medicine chest are the pharmaceutical powers of a truly democratic pantheon which, at once Judeo-Christian and Greco-Egyptian, can accommodate the coexistence of Christ and the Chnoubis, St. Symeon and King Solomon, and the cross and the *pentalpha*. When applied to consumable *eulogiai* their powers seem to have been essentially generic; Symeon clay, for example, could cure anything from baldness to leprosy. On the other hand, a surprising number of our amulets seem to have been designed to govern female ailments, and perhaps specifically infertility.¹³⁵ Yet these objects, too, pre-

¹³¹ Or, "Sts. Cosmas and Damian, bless [me]."

¹³² See M. C. Ross, "Byzantine Bronze Hands Holding Crosses," *Archaeology*, 17 (1964), 101 ff.; V. N. Zaleskaja, "Un monument byzantin à l'Ermitage et ces prototypes," (in Russian) *Palestinsky Sbornik*, 17(80) (1967), 84 ff. As with the Chnoubis, there is every reason to believe that this formal continuity carried with it a continuity of meaning and function. Yet even independent of its origins, this hand has qualities which corroborate its "medical" inscription, including an implication of power and prerogative (via the *globus cruciger*), of magic (note the two rings), and of healing (as in the "healing hand"—cf. Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage*, 38 f.; and note 43, above). There is a formal, and perhaps contentual, parallelism between the hand that supports the cross and the (healing) hand that each of the two holy doctors raises toward the suppliant before the cross. There is an Early Byzantine bronze ring in the Clemens Collection, Cologne, which shows an open hand surrounded by *Sphragis Solomonos*. See E. Moses, *Der Schmuck der Sammlung W. Clemens* (Cologne, 1925), 10 f., fig. 17.

¹³³ Peter and Paul, of course, frequently accompany the cross, while the Virgin and Child and the holy doctors are called for by their respective invocations. I know of no other Early Byzantine appearance of St. Stephen on a cross (those incised, hinged crosses in bronze upon which Stephen appears with some regularity are mid-Byzantine or later). Stephen carries his censer as the protodeacon. It must be for this medico-liturgical reason also that St. Stephen appears in the company of holy doctors in the so-called Chapel of the Physicians in S. Maria Antiqua. See Nordhagen, "S. Maria Antiqua," 55 ff.

¹³⁴ For an archeologist's view of the pervasiveness of Early Byzantine magic, see Russell, "The Evil Eye," 543 f.

¹³⁵ A similar observation was made by L. Bouras in her paper on "Security in Byzantium" delivered at the 1983 Birmingham Spring Symposium.

cisely because they invoke a variety of healing powers, could probably be counted on to do much more.

The roots of early Byzantium's supernatural medicine lie in the hellenized east Mediterranean, in Syria-Palestine and Egypt, the same region which saw its flowering during the sixth and seventh centuries. There the Chnoubis, apotropaic hands, haematite, and ring signs all enjoyed (in their various stages of mutation) a Byzantine afterlife, but only in the shadow of the pilgrim's experience, and in the objects and images that were developed to serve it. For it was holy sites and healing shrines—and the curative powers thought to reside there—which gave the artifacts of Early Byzantine medico-magic their distinctive flavor. The Chnoubis, after all, entered Byzantium's medicine chest in the company of a pilgrimage-generated christological cycle, and even the Jewish magician-doctor Solomon was on the pilgrim's agenda, for it was in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre that his famous seal ring was to be revered as a relic, beside the wood of the True Cross.¹³⁶

One final point is worthy of note. Our survey has revealed a continuous spectrum in early Byzantium's world of miraculous healing, between rem-

edies and implements thoroughly Christian and those patently magical. Why? Because while one's local bishop, town doctor, and neighborhood sorceress were almost certainly at odds over how best to evict the demon that possessed one,¹³⁷ the possessed did not indulge in the luxury of subtle differentiations. If need be, he called upon Christ, Solomon, and the Chnoubis in one breath; this is the truth that our objects reveal with incontrovertible clarity. They reveal a world thoroughly and openly committed to supernatural healing, and one wherein, for the sake of health, Christianity and sorcery had been forced into open partnership.

Dumbarton Oaks

¹³⁷The antipathy that existed between doctors and healing shrines is well known. See Magoulias, "The Lives of Saints," 129 ff. As for the attitude of doctors and churchmen to healing magic, the following two examples may be cited from the sixth century: Severus of Antioch, in his Homily CXX (PO, 29, 1, 583 f.), alludes to the practice of wearing medico-amuletic jewelry when he urges Christians to avoid those who propose "the suspension and attachment to necks or arms, or to other members [of those objects] called *phylacteria*, or protective amulets, even if they have an appearance of piety, for fear that, seeking the health of the body, we might not become even more sick of the soul. . . ." On the other hand, Alexander of Tralles (Puschmann, *Alexander*, II, 579) naively confesses that he finds himself obliged to recommend amulets for the treatment of colic, but only because some patients will not follow a strict regimen or endure drugs.

¹³⁶See Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, 59 (*Breviarius*).